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PROLOGUE AS LEGITIMATION: CHRISTOLOGICAL CONTROVERSY AND THE INTERPRETATION OF JOHN 1:1-18[*]

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Abstract

Recent scholarship on the Fourth Gospel has suggested that this document was produced by a Christian community which was involved in an intense conflict with a local synagogue, the focus of which was christology. This study attempts to relate the Johannine prologue to this context, using Berger and Luckmann's model of legitimation. John's christological portrait of Jesus in the prologue is best understood in terms of the author's use of traditions and imagery which were authoritative to both him and his opponents, in order to defend the legitimacy of his and his community's beliefs. By looking at the prologue from this perspective, our understanding of the development of the distinctive Johannine portrait of Jesus is enhanced.

Conflict and Christology in the Fourth Gospel

If there are two conclusions concerning which there has been a growing consensus among Johannine scholars, these would have to be (1) that the Fourth Gospel was formed in a context of intense conflict between a group of Jewish Christians and the local synagogue of which they were a part (until they were excluded by the authorities), and (2) that a key issue in the conflict, if not the key issue, was christology[1]. However, when the question is raised as to the *origins* of the Johannine 'high' christology, which resulted in its expulsion from the synagogue, this consensus breaks down incredibly quickly into uncertainty and confusion. Innumerable suggestions have been made, some playing down the differences between John and the Synoptics, others regarding the differences as indicators that Johannine christology has been influenced by Samaritan or Gentile thought to a degree sufficient to have radically altered the Johannine

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[1] See especially J. L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1979²; John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, pp.166-181.

Christians' understanding of who Jesus is[2]. More recently an alternative approach has been to regard the social setting of the Johannine community as explaining the distinctive Johannine christology[3]. Elsewhere I have argued that this latter approach appears to provide a plausible and satisfying explanation of Johannine christological development, doing justice to both its continuity with earlier Christian christology and its distinctiveness[4]. The sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann[5] have shown how the process of worldview-maintenance which they call 'legitimation' moves a community to defend its beliefs in response to new issues and new threats by developing them, drawing out new implications from them, and so on. This process, which again I have summarized elsewhere, would appear to provide a plausible explanation of what stimulated the distinctive developments in Johannine christology, thus offering a solution to this aspect of the Johannine puzzle.

In this study we shall be looking at the Johannine prologue from the perspective of Berger and Luckmann's model of legitimation. But before proceeding, there are certain preliminary matters that must be considered briefly. The prologue of John's Gospel has been the focus of much intense research and discussion, and there can be said to be much disagreement, but also significant agreement, on many issues related to its character and background.

Background

Since Bultmann's 1925 article, "Der religionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannesevangelium"[6], it has become generally accepted that the essential background to the prologue is to be found in the realm of Jewish

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[2] Cf. R. E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, Mahwah: Paulist, 1979, pp.37-39; Maurice Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*, Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991. See the discussion in my article, "Change in Christology: New Testament Models and the Contemporary Task", forthcoming in *Irish Theological Quarterly*.

[3] Wayne Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism", reprinted in *The Interpretation of John*, ed. John Ashton, Philadelphia: Fortress Press/London: SPCK, 1986, pp.141-173; Jerome Neyrey, *An Ideology of Revolt. John's Christology in Social-Science Perspective*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988; Martyn, *op.cit.*; Robert Kysar, "Christology and Controversy: The Contributions of the Prologue of the Gospel of John to New Testament Christology and their Historical Setting", *Currents in Theology and Mission* 5 (1978), *passim.*

[4] See my forthcoming article cited above (n.2), as well as my "Going Up and Coming Down in Johannine Legitimation", forthcoming in *Neotestamentica* 31/1 (1997).

[5] Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, London: Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 1967, pp.122-127.

[6] In *EYXAPIΣTHPION. Festschrift für H. Gunkel*, ii, Göttingen, 1925: 3-26; an abridged translation is given in John Ashton (editor), *The Interpretation of John*, London: SPCK, 1986, pp.18-35.

Wisdom speculation[7]. That this is correct can be demonstrated from a careful comparison with Jewish wisdom texts, as has frequently been done[8]. The Johannine prologue also bears a close relationship to earlier Christian developments in the area of Wisdom christology, as also becomes apparent through a comparison of texts.

Character

Attempts to find a single term to express exactly the function which this section performs in the context of the entire Gospel have not yet yielded a generally-accepted term, apart from the one which we have been using throughout our discussion thus far: *prologue*. This term is not perfect, but if for no other reason than its general acceptance will do for our purposes[9]. More important for our purposes is the question of whether and to what extent John has used traditional material, such as a pre-Christian hymn to Wisdom or a Christian hymn, which he has subsequently edited in order to express his distinctive theology. The review of previous views on this subject which has recently been undertaken by Jürgen Habermann[10] shows just how varied are the conclusions which have been reached on this subject. However, there does not seem to be any doubt that the language of the prologue is poetic or hymnic in nature, rather than prose.

One conclusion which seems quite firm is that the sections of the prologue relating to John the Baptist (1:6-8,15) are not all of a piece with the rest of the prologue. In the view of some, the hymnic part of the prologue is earlier, and the author or redactor of the Gospel has added the references to the Baptist. However, more recently it has been argued[11] that the prose sections about the Baptist are earlier and were actually a part of the original Gospel, which were subsequently separated and woven into the fabric of the

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[7] For contemporary upholders of a Wisdom background see Brown, *The Gospel According to John. I-XII*, New York: Doubleday, 1966, pp.521-524; John Painter, "Christology and the History of the Johannine Community in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel", *NTS* 30 (1984), p.465; James Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, London: SCM Press, 1989, pp.241-244; C. A. Evans, *Word and Glory. On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue* (JSNTSup, 89), JSOT/Sheffield Academic Press, 1993, pp.83-94; Ashton, *Studying John. Approaches to the Fourth Gospel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, pp.6f.

[8] In light of the detailed lists of parallels which can be found in works such as C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge University Press, 1953, pp.274f and Evans, *op.cit.*, pp.83-94, it has not been deemed necessary to include such a display of parallels here.

[9] On this see further G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Dallas: Word, 1987, p.5; J. Habermann, *Präexistenzaussagen im Neuen Testament*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990, p.318.

[10] Habermann, *op.cit.*, 318-414 (eight pages (406-414) are needed simply to summarize, in chart form, the views set forth by scholars from Weisse in 1856 up until Hofius in 1987).

[11] Cf. John Robinson, "The Relationship of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John", *Twelve More New Testament Studies*, (first published in *NTS* 9 (1962-3), pp.120-129), London: SCM Press, 1984, pp.71-74; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976, p.76; R. T. Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, p.28.

prologue when it was added to the Gospel. This latter option seems to be the more likely of the two. The key argument in favour of this position is the fact that John 1:19 presupposes that the identity of 'John' is already known, suggesting that the original Gospel contained material prior to 1:19. This is further supported by the parallels with the beginning of Mark's Gospel.

John Ashton has written in a recent study of the prologue, "Any exegesis that depends upon a precisely accurate reconstruction of the *Vorlage* is open to suspicion. This is not because such a reconstruction would be unhelpful, but because it is virtually unattainable. Not one of the many different versions that have been proposed compels assent, and few are immune from the charge of special pleading. In general most of the purely stylistic arguments advanced in favour of one version or other of the hymn are too subjective to command a wide following"[12]. In view of the difficulties involved in distinguishing with certainty different layers of the hymn (other than those pertaining to John the Baptist), our focus here will be primarily on how John is using traditional Wisdom language, on the relationship between his use of such language and its use in other documents which are clearly pre-Johannine, and on how the Johannine use of Wisdom motifs in the prologue might have been relevant to the conflict setting in which we have suggested it was written.

Structure

It will also be important for our discussion to assess the structure of the prologue. In recent times a number of scholars have argued that the prologue actually has the structure of a chiasm or inverted parallelism[13]. It appears almost certain that at the very least the beginning and end of the prologue form an *inclusio*[14] (the eternal place of the Word with God being paralleled by the place of the μονογενης[15] alongside God). However, the mediation of

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[12] Ashton, *op.cit.*, p.6.

[13] So e.g. R. A. Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue", *NTS* 27 (1980), pp.1-31; M. E. Boismard, *Moise ou Jésus. Essai de Christologie Johannique* (BETL, 84), Leuven University Press 1988, pp.97f; John W. Pryor, "Jesus and Israel in the Fourth Gospel - John 1:11", *NovT* 32/3 (1990), pp.201f; *id., John: Evangelist of the Covenant People*, Leicester: IVP, 1992, pp.9f; C. H. Talbert, *Reading John*, London: SPCK 1992, pp.66f; Mark Stibbe, *John*, JSOT/Sheffield Academic Press, 1993, *ad.loc.*

[14] So e.g. I. de la Potterie, "Structure du Prologue de Saint Jean", *NTS* 30 (1984), pp.373f; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Leicester: IVP, 1991, p.135; F. Manns, *L'Evangile de Jean à la lumière du Judaisme* (SBFA,33), Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1991, p.34. See also Brown, *Gospel*, p.36; Habermann, *op.cit.*, p.400.

[15] The reading μονογενης θεος is accepted by the 26th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* as the most likely original reading, primarily on the basis that the majority reading (μονογενης υιος) is the more usual phrase and thus is the easier reading of the two. See further the discussions in R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John. Volume 1*, Wellwood: Burns and Oates, 1968, pp.279f; D. A. Fennema, "John 1.18: 'God the Only Son'", *NTS* 31 (1985), pp.124-135; M. J. Harris, *Jesus as God. The New Testament Use of Theos in*

the Word or of Jesus in creation and salvation appear to parallel one another (v3,17), as do the references to the light coming into the world (v9) and the Word becoming flesh (v14). A further convincing argument in favour of this structure is the way the final author or redactor has inserted the material concerning John the Baptist in what appear to be corresponding sections of the prologue. It thus appears likely that the prologue is intended to reflect a downward-upward motion on the part of the Word, a move from eternal existence alongside God to a return to the Father's side.

The most important objection which has been raised against the suggestion that the prologue follows a chiastic structure is the failure of such a structure to place at the centre the climactic verse, 'And the Word became flesh'[16]. Culpepper considers that both Käsemann and Bultmann must be incorrect in regarding v14 as the climax of the prologue, for in his view, "It would be strange indeed if the evangelist (or redactor) gave careful enough attention to the structure of the prologue to create a beautiful chiasm, but failed to place the phrase he was most intent on emphasizing at its centre"[17]. Culpepper then devotes much effort to a discussion of what he considers the climax of the prologue, its central point or 'pivot', which refers to the giving of authority to become children of God.[18] In our view, Culpepper is on the whole correct in his delineation of the prologue's structure, but wrong in his conclusion about where the climactic point is to be found. For one scholar who is very knowledgeable concerning the use of parallelism in Middle Eastern societies, Kenneth Bailey, is of the view that the 'turning point' of an inverted parallelism or chiasm tends to be immediately *after* the centre. "Usually there is a "point of turning" just past the center of the structure. The second half is not redundant. Rather it introduces some crucial new element that resolves or completes the first half".[19] This means that, in the case of the prologue, the 'turning point' would be the decisive verse, "The Word became

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Reference to Jesus, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992, pp.74-92. See also, however, the arguments of Margaret Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel* (JSNTSup,69), JSOT/Sheffield Academic Press, 1992, pp.123f, who argues that the addition of θεος is a result of the temptation for scribes to make later doctrines of the church more explicit in the Bible (cf. n.40 below). If θεος is an original part of v18, this would make the parallelism with vv1-2 stronger, but the parallelism is still clear without it.

[16] This objection has been made most recently by Ashton, *op.cit.*, p.27.

[17] Culpepper, *op.cit.*, p.14. See also Boismard, *op.cit.*, p.100; Pryor, "Jesus and Israel", p.202.

[18] Culpepper, *op.cit.*, pp.17-31. This view concerning what is at the centre of the prologue's literary structure is one reason why de la Potterie rejects a concentric structure (*op.cit.*, p.356). None of his objections really applies to the structure and reading proposed here.

[19] Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes* (combined edition), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983, p.50.

flesh...", even though the structural centre of the prologue is to be located in the area of vv12-13.[20]

        Talbert's version of the prologue's structure is as follows:[21]

A (vv1-5): The relation of the Logos to God, creation, humans

B (vv6-8): The witness of John the Baptist

 C (vv9-11): The coming of the light/Logos and his rejection

 D (vv12-13): The benefits of belief in the Logos

 C' (v14): The coming of the Logos and his reception

B' (v15): The witness of John the Baptist

A' (vv16-18): The relation of the Logos to humans,
           re-creation, God

The structures proposed by Boismard[22] and Culpepper[23] are essentially the same as this, although they distinguish parallels in greater detail in certain sections. For example, both agree in making a further distinction in the area Talbert denotes as A and A', regarding vv1-2 as parallel to v18, v3 as parallel to v17, and vv4-5 as parallel to v16. In this they may very well be correct, and at the very least the parallels between vv1-2 and v18 are sufficient to merit their treatment as a separate section[24]. For our purposes, the overall outline proposed by Talbert will be sufficient, although it is recognized that further delineation of more detailed parallels may be possible.

        We may now move on to a consideration of the prologue against the background of the Johannine conflict setting, the community's need to engage in legitimation/apologetic, and of the pre-Johannine traditions inherited by the community. Verses which parallel one another in the prologue will be treated together, since there is usually in chiasm, as in all parallelism, something significant to be learned from relating parallel terms or statements to one another.

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[20] If this is correct, then it is quite plausible that the first half of the prologue refers primarily to the activity of the pre-existent Logos, although Ashton (*op.cit.*, ch.1) is certainly correct in his view that no Christian could read the prologue without thinking of the figure of Jesus throughout. It also answers de la Potterie's objection that the proposed structure is 'statique', the second part adding nothing to the first (*op.cit.*, p.356).

[21] Talbert, *op.cit.*, p.66; see also Pryor, *op.cit.*, p.202.

[22] See Boismard, *op.cit.*, p.98.

[23] See Culpepper, *op.cit.*, p.16.

[24] I am less certain of Culpepper's distinction in the central section (Talbert's D) between v12a and v12c, which he regards as parallel, and v12b, which he considers to form the true centre. It is not that the structure discerned by Culpepper is not there, but simply that the whole of v12 is linked together to such an extent that it should be treated as a whole rather than being further divided in the way Culpepper suggests.

vv1-2) The first verse of the Fourth Gospel takes up the opening words of Genesis (1:1), "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"[25]. John's decision to begin his Gospel in this way[26] needs to be explained, since in no other New Testament document which can be dated earlier than the Fourth Gospel with any degree of certainty is the story of Jesus introduced with a comparable affirmation of pre-existence[27]. John is also frequently regarded as distinctive in his use of Logos rather than Sophia to refer to the pre-existent Christ. This is not entirely correct: the only actual reference to Jesus as Sophia in the New Testament is found in 1 Corinthians 1:24, which does not appear in the context of the hymnic language which is generally recognized as typical of the Wisdom hymns. There is thus no reason to believe that the pre-existent one who became incarnate in Christ had already been exclusively identified with Sophia, as opposed to say Logos or Pneuma, and it is thus possible that John is not making any significant replacement or change to the tradition, but rather is simply using one of several possible alternative terms available to him[28]. His choice of Logos is probably due, not to the fact that it is masculine in contrast to feminine Sophia, but to the fact that Genesis 1, to which the author is alluding, refers to God speaking, and thus by implication to the Word of God.

What significance would introducing the Gospel with these words from the beginning of the Torah (and of the whole Hebrew Bible) have had in the context of the Johannine Christians' conflict setting? Firstly, it would provide a definite sense of continuity with traditional Jewish beliefs. The author clearly intends to link the coming of Jesus Christ and the existence of Christianity with the very beginnings of God's plan, as well as with the revelation and creative and saving acts of God recorded in the Old Testament. This would be extremely important in the context of a worldview

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[25] Cf. Brown, *op.cit.*, p.4. Lindars, *op.cit.*, p.82; Martin Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus* (JSNTSup, 71), JSOT/Sheffield Academic Press, 1992, p.95; and Ben Witherington, *Jesus the Sage*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press/ Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994, p.284 note the relationship with not only Gen.1:1, but also Prov.8:22 and other parts of the wisdom corpus.

[26] Even if John is here using an already existing hymn, we must still explain the author's choice of this hymn for use as an introduction to his Gospel.

[27] This is not to say that John's introduction bears no resemblance to the introductions to the other Gospels. For the parallels and similarities between the opening sections of John and Mark in particular, see Morna Hooker, "The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret", *NTS* 21 (1974), pp.40-58.

[28] Scott (*op.cit.*, p.94) points out that "by the time of the writing of the Fourth Gospel the concepts Logos and Sophia had become more or less synonymous in at least some areas of Jewish thought". See also G. Schimanowski, *Weisheit und Messias. Die jüdischen Voraussetzungen der urchristlichen Präexistenzchristologie* (WUNT: Reihe 2, 17), Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1985, pp.75-77; Dunn, *op.cit.*, p.266; Talbert, ""And the Word Became Flesh": When?", in *The Future of Christology. Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keck*, ed. Abraham J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993, pp.45f.

in which it was generally accepted that that which is older is original, more authentic and thus more highly valued[29].

Another significant factor which may have influenced the author of this verse to use 'Word' rather than 'Wisdom' or any of the other alternatives may have been the use of the term 'Word' (Greek λογος, Aramaic *Mêmra*) in Jewish thought. This use of 'Word', attested to in the works of Philo and in the Targums, is parallel to the use of Wisdom, but is significantly different in that the Word is frequently used for appearances of God in the Old Testament, and on the whole is more definitely identified as being none other than God himself. Further. as is frequently noted by scholars, there is no clear statement to the effect that 'Wisdom was God' to be found in Jewish literature of this period[30], whereas in Philo the Logos is clearly identified as θεος (not as ὁ θεος) just as it is in John.[31] In the context of the debate over the relationship between christology and monotheism, the identification of Jesus as the *Word* made flesh (as opposed to *Wisdom* made flesh) would bear more weight as a justification of the exalted status attributed to Jesus and the honour given to him.

Before proceeding, some justification should be given to our use of the term *Mêmra* ('Word') and of similar targumic terminology in our exegesis of the Johannine prologue, since C. K. Barrett's view that "*Memra* is a blind alley in the study of the biblical background of John's logos doctrine"[32] is an opinion shared by numerous other scholars. The main reason which he gives for his conclusion is the fact that *Mêmra* "was not truly a hypostasis but a means of speaking about God without using his name, and thus a means of avoiding the numerous anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament"[33], whereas presumably in his view figures such as Wisdom or Philo's λογος were genuine hypostases[34]. However, such a conclusion is clearly questionable in the light of much of the recent research which has been undertaken in these areas. In particular, we may note the view of Dunn, who, after a discussion of Jewish texts relating to Wisdom, concludes that "the Hellenistic Judaism of the LXX did not think of Wisdom as a 'hypostasis' or 'intermediary being' any more than did the OT writers and the rabbis. Wisdom, like the name, the

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[29] See e.g. Philip Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp.212-215.

[30] C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 1978², p.155 regards Wisd.7:25 as perhaps the closest that anything from this period comes to such a statement.

[31] *Somn.*1.39 §230; *Qu.Gen.*2.62. The Logos is also called 'divine' (θειος) in *Fug.*18 §97; 19 §101; *Qu.Ex.*2.68; *Op.Mund.*5 §20; *Migr.Abr.*31 §174.

[32] Barrett, *op.cit.*, p.153. See also the viewpoints of other scholars quoted by M. McNamara, *Targum and Testament*, Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972, p.101.

[33] Barrett, *op.cit.*, p.153.

[34] *op.cit.*, p.153f.

glory, the Spirit of Yahweh, was a way of asserting God's nearness, his involvement with his world, his concern for his people"[35]. It is a personification and is not conceived of as a separate entity alongside God. The same is true of Philo's λογος[36]. There is thus a growing number of scholars who are of the view that Raymond Brown's view of the Aramaic *Mêmra*, that it was "not a personification, but...a buffer for divine transcendence...a paraphrase for God in his dealings with men"[37], would apply equally well to other figures such as Wisdom or Logos. Perhaps the key reason for the differences between the use of *Mêmra* in the Targums on the one hand, and the use of Wisdom or Word in the wisdom literature and Philo on the other, is the difference of genre. It is only when Philo discusses the *concept* of the λογος that he makes assertions about it being a 'second god' and the like. However, when the Logos appears in Philo's accounts of stories from the Jewish Scriptures, it functions in a way that is very similar to and reminiscent of the Targumic *Mêmra*. In the case of all these figures, we only find ourselves dealing with something which is more than a metaphor, with a real being clearly separate from God, in the later stages of the specifically Christian developments which identify these 'figures' with Jesus Christ.

v18) The statement that Jesus, now exalted to the right hand of God[38], is the one who is able to make God known[39], parallels the opening statements

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[35] Dunn, *op.cit.*, p.176. His treatment of the Jewish wisdom texts is found on pp.168-176. See also John F. Balchin, "Paul, Wisdom and Christ", in *Christ the Lord. Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie*, ed. Harold H. Rowdon, Leicester: IVP, 1982, pp.207f, who warns against reading later Christian trinitarian doctrine back into the Jewish Wisdom literature.

[36] See Dunn's discussion, *op.cit.*, pp.215-230. See also the discussion of Wisdom and Logos in Larry Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, London: SCM Press, 1988:ch.2.

[37] Brown, *op.cit.*, p.524. That this was the intended function of *Mêmra* becomes clear from the texts cited by McNamara, *op.cit.*, p.98. This can also be seen from the view expressed by R.Judah ben Ila'i (2nd cent. C.E.) as a principle of translation: "He who translates a verse literally is a liar, and he who adds to it is a blasphemer" (Tos.*Meg.*4.41; *b.Kiddushin* 49a). To illustrate the point he adduces Ex.24:10, and says that to render literally is to lie, because no one can be said to have seen God, but to add 'angel' is to blaspheme, and substitute a creature for the Creator. The proper rendering according to R.Judah is: 'They saw the *glory* of the God of Israel', which is substantially how the text is rendered in all the Targums (The version of this saying cited by Dunn, *op.cit.*, pp.130f is given without reference, but is most likely a later form, since it may well be concerned with the specifically Christian arguments from Scripture for Trinitarian doctrine). This reference, and that found in *Meg.*4.9, are also significant inasmuch as they show that Targumic traditions relevant to our discussion were already current by the second century C.E. at the latest.

[38] 'In the bosom of' means 'seated (in the place of honour) alongside', as can be seen from John 13:23 and Luke 16:22f. Beasley-Murray, *op.cit.*, p.4, is of the view that the prologue does not end with the exaltation of the redeemer, in contrast with most other New Testament hymns, and this is one reason why he does not accept Culpepper's proposal concerning its chiastic

concerning the Word alongside God 'in the beginning'. Immediately in v18 we are confronted with a number of points, all of which are significant for our study. Firstly, we have the assertion that no one (apart from the μονογενης[40], as is soon clarified) has ever seen God, a statement which is widely recognized as polemical. Then, we have a reference to the exalted place of Jesus, which we know from several passages later on in the Gospel was problematic for many Jews. Lastly, we have a reference to Jesus as the revealer of God. We shall treat each of these points in turn.

The assertion that no one has ever seen God clearly evokes reminiscences of the Old Testament[41]. In the Old Testament, although there are a number of ambiguous incidents, there is a clear teaching that no one could see God and live. This is true even of Moses[42], who is described as having spoken to God 'face to face'. Thus, on the one hand, the author of the prologue expresses his acceptance of this important tenet of Jewish belief, that no one has seen God. Yet on the other hand, the author emphasizes that the μονογενης - the Logos who was with God in the beginning, and who has now 'become flesh' - shares an incomparably intimate relationship with God, and thus can make God known in a way that no one who does not share this relationship (which means, effectively, no one else at all) is able to[43].

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structure. However, it is unlikely that any early Christian, hearing a reference to the Son 'at the Father's side', could fail to think of the present exalted place of Jesus. See further Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995, p.225. Although the cross is not mentioned in the Prologue, this does not necessarily mean that John has no real place for the suffering and humiliation of Jesus, nor that the Prologue does not end with the post-resurrection exaltation of Jesus (*contra* Kysar, *op.cit.*, pp.352f).

[39] The recent argument of I. de la Potterie ("«C'est lui qui a ouvert la voie». La finale du prologue johannique", *Biblica* 69 (1988), pp.340-370) that εξηγησατο used without a predicate bears more naturally the sense of 'opening the way' has failed to convince the present author, not because of any lack in de la Potterie's lexicographic arguments, but because he has failed to make sense of the phrase in its context in the prologue. The reference to no one having seen God seems to anticipate a reference to revelation. At any rate, if the meaning is that the μονογενης has opened the way for people to see God in and through Jesus Christ, then this is still essentially a reference to the revelation which Jesus brought and thus does not significantly affect our discussion.

[40] Davies (*op.cit.*, pp.123f) suggests that 'the Only One' (without 'Son' or 'God'), a reading which is found in one Vulgate manuscript, in the Diatesseron, in Origen, and in the writings of some other church fathers, is the original reading in John 1.18. She argues that the other readings arise from the temptation to make explicit in the Prologue of John the later doctrines of the church. The addition of either 'God' or 'Son' is explicable as a further explanation of the text whereas it is difficult to imagine why either word would be dropped. It also makes sense in the Johannine context, taking up the reference of 1.14. Nowhere else in John is 'God' contrasted with 'Father'.

[41] Cf. Brown, *op.cit.*, pp.35f; Lindars, *op.cit.*, p.98; Barrett, *op.cit.*, p.169; Beasley-Murray, *op.cit.*, p.15; Carson, *op.cit.*, p.134.

[42] For the view that there is an implied contrast with Moses here, see Hooker, *op.cit.*, p.54.

[43] The Logos as 'God revealed' is particularly close to Philo's thought.

The reference to Jesus 'in the bosom of the Father', or, in other words, at God's right hand, is a reference to the exalted status of Jesus, as we have already pointed out. The claim that Jesus had been exalted to a status alongside God was objectionable to many Jews even in the pre-Johannine period[44]. In the Johannine community at least, this came to be even more of a key issue, and one that provoked intense Jewish opposition. In this context, there is a clear significance to the fact that John parallels the pre-existent status of the Word with the exalted post-existent status of Jesus. It appears that the author would have us find the justification for the exalted status of Jesus in the eternal glory and position of the Logos. We have already noted in our discussion of the opening verses of the prologue how certain elements in the author's choice of expression would have relevance to any attempt to justify the attribution to Jesus of a status akin to that of God, and in light of the parallelism which exists between the beginning and end of the prologue, it would appear justified to assert that this was precisely what the author was concerned to do. Jesus may rightly occupy this exalted position, because the Word eternally occupied it, and Jesus it the person in and as whom the Word has 'become flesh'.

Also important in this verse is the reference to Jesus as the one who has made God known. This bears obvious relation to one of the key themes of the conflict between the Johannine Christians and the synagogue, namely the question of Jesus' qualifications to be the revealer. Since the reference is ostensibly to the exalted, post-resurrection Jesus, it could be suggested that Jesus is presented as being the revealer *precisely in his present exalted state*. However, the perfect tense ἐξηγησατο makes clear that the author is thinking primarily (although perhaps not exclusively) of the ministry of the earthly Jesus: it was then that "we beheld his glory". In relation to this issue the parallel with the opening of the prologue is also relevant. Jesus is able to be the revealer because he is the incarnation of the pre-existent Word. In the Targums, it is frequently the Word (or alternatively the Spirit) who spoke to Moses[45]. The Word or Wisdom is also frequently identified with the Torah[46].

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[44] Cf. the accusation of 'blasphemy' in the Synoptic trial accounts. See also the rabbinic account of the discussion involving R.Akiba concerning the plural 'thrones' in Dan.7:9 in *b*.Hag.14a; *b*.Sanh.38b.

[45] Neofiti renders Num.7:89 as: "And when Moses used to go into the tent of meeting to speak with him, he used to hear the voice of the *Dibbêra* (Word) speaking with him...from between the two cherubim; from there the *Dibbêra* used to speak with him". Pseudo-Jonathan renders it: "And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with him, he heard *the voice of the spirit [qal rûha]* that conversed with him when it descended from the highest heavens above the mercy-seat, above the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; and from there the *Dibbêra* conversed with him"

[46] See especially Sir.24:23; Bar.4:1.

Thus the one with whom Moses spoke, and whose will or wisdom was embodied in the revelation given to Moses, had now actually appeared on the scene as a human being[47]. The fact that the one who 'became flesh' in and as Jesus was one who shared in pre-existence with God also has direct relevance to the question of Jesus' qualifications as revealer. As we have noted earlier, in many streams of Jewish thought Moses was believed to have ascended to heaven in order to receive the Torah. In contrast to Moses' knowledge of heavenly things as at most a brief visitor to heaven, which was all that any human seer could ever hope to become, the Son has an eternal knowledge of God, which provides a basis for revelation far superior to that of any other.

vv3-5) In these verses, referring primarily to the pre-incarnate Logos' work in creation, we again find clear allusions to the role of Wisdom in many Jewish writings. A number of scholars have noted the important parallel which is to be found in 1QS 11:11[48]. This part of the Community Rule says of God, "All things come to pass by His knowledge; He establishes all things by His design and without Him nothing is done"[49]. If this verse gives us any insight into the meaning of John 1:3, then we should not render γενεσθαι as 'to create' but rather as 'to happen', as Ashton and several others have suggested. In favour of this suggestion is the fact that parallels in the Wisdom literature normally use the verb κτιζω to express creation, or alternatively ποιεω. However, this would be to choose between two equally valid renderings of a Greek word which may legitimately carry both meanings[50]. Given the parallels of language between this part of the prologue and so many instances in Jewish literature concerning Wisdom, where Wisdom is described as the mediatrix of creation, it would appear both unwise and unnecessary to exclude the idea of creation here. Perhaps this term was chosen because of its ambiguity, allowing the same phrase to refer to God's action of both creation and salvation[51]. In the Hebrew Bible, and much subsequent Jewish theology, the motifs and imagery of creation and

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[47] The relationship between these two revelations will be discussed below in connection with vv16-17.

[48] T.E.Pollard, P.Lamarche, I. de la Potterie, and now John Ashton (*op.cit.*, p.19). See also the *Gospel of Truth* 37:21.

[49] Vermes' translation.

[50] As Ashton notes in connection with the question of whether 'Jews' or 'Judaeans' is a better rendering of the Greek Ιουδαιοι, choosing between the two involves excluding a sense which is genuinely there in the Greek. Choosing either one is a falsification, and exposes the deficiencies of any language to carry the full meaning of words in another language (Ashton, *op.cit.*, pp.39,42).

[51] See Habermann, *op.cit.*, p.363.

salvation were inextricably linked[52]. This was also true of Christian theology prior to John, where we find a similar logic being followed through in connection with the christological use of Wisdom language. A prime example is the hymnic passage of Col.1:15-20, where Wisdom language is used to parallel the role of Christ in creation and in the new creation[53]. The working through of some of the logical implications of the role attributed to Christ by Christians in the restoration of God's plan for creation had apparently begun already in the pre-Johannine period.

In terms of the conflict setting we have posited, would these verses have had any particular relevance? The reference to the light shining in the darkness, but not being understood or overcome by it, is clearly intended to reflect the hostile reception which the Logos received in the world, even from 'his own'. The rejection of Jesus - the Logos incarnate - could not have been far from the author's mind. It is in no way problematic to suggest this, even if the view is taken that these verses refer primarily to the period before the incarnation[54]; in fact, it actually helps to show the relevance of these verses to the Johannine work of legitimation. In many places in the New Testament, Christian writers justify the failure of the Jews to believe, and to respond positively to Jesus or the early Christians, by pointing out the failure of Israel throughout its history to respond to God (or to his appointed prophets or leaders) as they should.[55] It seems likely that the references to light and darkness in the present verses are an attempt by the Fourth Evangelist to present the rejection of Jesus - and presumably also the Johannine community - in a similar way. The coming of God's Word into the world had from the very beginning of creation caused there to be a division, a separation between light and darkness[56]. Throughout Israel's history this pattern continued, with only a remnant remaining faithful to Yahweh, and

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[52] For example, one may think of the exodus language, where language which traditionally related to the defeat of the sea monster at creation was taken up to refer to the 'defeat of the sea' in order for Israel to cross the Sea of Reeds and be redeemed. This influenced Israel's creation stories and hymns, which in turn influenced Second Isaiah's portrait of the return of Israel from exile as a 'second exodus' and 'new creation'.

[53] See the helpful discussion in G. B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1976, *ad.loc.*

[54] As the present tense of φαινει shows, the reference may be primarily to the period prior to the incarnation, but if so it does not refer exclusively to this period: the light continues to shine, and the darkness has still not understood or overcome it. Cf. Schnackenburg, *op.cit.*, pp.245-247; Beasley-Murray, *op.cit.*, p.11.

[55] See e.g. Matthew 23:29-32,37-39; Acts 7; 28:25-28; Romans 9:27-29.

[56] A non-Christian reader could here understand the reference to be (exclusively) to creation, whereas a Christian reader would think of the moral overtones of the light/darkness contrast and relate the language to events in salvation history. Carson (*op.cit.*, p.119) calls v5 "a masterpiece of planned ambiguity".

with many rejecting Wisdom.[57] John's language would be useful as a response to objections to the idea of Jesus being the Messiah or revealer made on the basis of the fact that the majority of the Jews had not accepted him as such: John (like many other Jewish and Christian authors in a similar context) pointed out that it had never been the majority which remained faithful and believed[58].

vv16-17) These verses, which refer to the activity of the Logos in salvation history, appear to parallel vv3-5, a point which would seem to confirm our suggestion that the unity of creation and redemption is important for the author of the prologue[59], as for many Jews and Jewish Christians. That the author believes that we have all received from the fullness of his grace is quite clear[60]. However, the relationship of this χαρις to another χαρις, described through the use of the preposition ἀντι, is much more ambiguous. There is increasing agreement that this phrase does not support the meaning which has often been attributed to it, namely 'grace upon grace'. The preposition αντι normally denotes the idea of 'replacement', and since what is being replaced is also described as 'grace', the idea must be something along the lines of 'one grace being replaced by another, even greater grace'[61].

This difficult phrase should not be interpreted in isolation from the verse which follows, in which the giving of the Law through Moses is related to the appearance of grace and truth on the scene of human history through Jesus Christ.[62] The parallelism between Moses and Jesus here is frequently described as antithetic[63]. However, given the fact that Moses is a positive witness to Christ, and that the grace of the Old Testament period was genuine grace, the view of those scholars who feel that the contrast is between the 'giving' of grace in and through the Law and the 'coming' of

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[57] See the earlier Jewish use of this idea in 1 Enoch 42:1-3; Bar.3:12.

[58] This point is also to the fore in v11. See our discussion below.

[59] Boismard (*op.cit.*, p.98) considers v3 and v17 to parallel one another, referring to these verses under the respective headings, "Rôle du Logos dans la création" and "Rôle de l'Unique-Engendré dans la re-création".

[60] Schnackenburg (*op.cit.*, p.275) rightly concludes that the term πληρωμα "has certainly nothing to do with Gnostic speculations on the pleroma...One is rather reminded of the quite ordinary expression in the O.T., "the fullness" - of God's grace, Ps 5:8, of his graces, Ps 106:45, of his mercy, Ps 51:3; 69:17; so too 1QS 4:4, "the fullness of his grace"".

[61] Ruth B. Edwards, "Χαριν αντι χαριτος (John 1.16). Grace and the Law in the Johannine Prologue", *JSNT* 32 (1988), pp.3-15. A useful discussion of the various possibilities is also found in Brown, *op.cit.*, p.15f.

[62] This is a further reason for our hesitation to accept the structural proposal of Culpepper and Boismard to separate these verses in their proposed chiasm.

[63] So e.g. Boismard, *op.cit.*, p.104.

grace as an actual human person, where both are genuinely the grace of God but the latter is a superior expression of that grace, appears a much more satisfactory understanding of the author's meaning.[64] Yet to speak of the parallelism as 'synthetic' may also be misleading, since there can be no doubt that a contrast is implied between the Mosaic dispensation and that of Jesus the Messiah. The author of the prologue would probably not have agreed with the view, expressed in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, that Moses and Jesus are equally bringers of salvation, the one for Jews, the other for Gentiles. Although there is no polemic against Torah observance, presumably because the Johannine Christians, as part of their local synagogue, had not had anything like the huge influx of Gentile converts which the Pauline churches experienced[65], it would seem legitimate to conclude that the Johannine view is still in many ways closer to the Pauline view than to that of the *Homilies*: the Mosaic covenant was not valueless, but cannot be regarded in the same way once one has come to see the far surpassing glory manifested in Jesus Christ[66]. Belief in Moses is not contrasted with belief in Christ in the Fourth Gospel; rather, the one who has truly believed Moses should find it a natural step to believe in Jesus Christ. In the present passage a similar line of thought seems to be followed: we (primarily Jews) have experienced God's grace throughout history, and the only appropriate response is to respond to its fullest manifestation ever, which is to be found in the Word-become-flesh, Jesus Christ.

Before moving on, we may note that here too there is an implicit Wisdom allusion, inasmuch as Jesus Christ is identified with the one the fullness of whose grace was manifested in various ways in the Old

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[64] So especially Schnackenburg, *op.cit.*, p.277; Davies, *op.cit.*, p.128. See also Brown, *op.cit.*, p.16; Kysar, *op.cit.*, p.359. Schnackenburg correctly notes that observance of the Law is never something negative in John, and Davies writes: "Since the law is characterized as God's grace, and since, later in the Gospel, teaching in the law is taken to be authoritative, no denigration can be intended". On the place of the Torah in Johannine Christianity, see the present author's "Johannine Christianity - *Jewish* Christianity?", in *Koinonia Journal* VIII.1 (Spring 1996). See also the discussion of S. Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel. The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity according to John* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum, 42) Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975. Painter (*op.cit.*, p.466) and Schnelle (*Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, p.31) are guilty of reading Paulinism into the Fourth Gospel.

[65] Perhaps those Gentiles who did join the Johannine Christians had already been proselytes or God-fearers.

[66] Cf. 2 Corinthians 3:6-18. However, the author of the Fourth Gospel would not have agreed with Paul's assessment of Torah in terms of the 'letter that kills'. It would probably be best to say that the Fourth Gospel occupies a place somewhere between the Pauline writings and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, one similar perhaps to the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*, and to avoid suggesting that the Fourth Gospel is much closer to one or the other. See my forthcoming study "Johannine Christianity - *Jewish* Christianity?" (n.64 above).

Testament and was expressed in the giving of the Law through Moses. As we have had occasion to note on several occasions, there are numerous passages from the intertestamental period which identify Wisdom and Torah[67]. The identification of Jesus as the one whose grace is expressed, albeit partially, in Torah, presents him as one who is superior to it, and who is thus to be taken with the utmost of seriousness.

vv6-8,15) In these verses we are confronted with the first mention of the person of John the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel, and as we have already seen, it is quite probable that these verses once stood as the opening of the Gospel[68]. It seems likely that there was at some stage in the community's history a debate with a continuing group of disciples of the Baptist. Although it is reasonable to relate the apparently polemical statement in v8 to such a setting, we have very little information upon which to reconstruct this conflict, and we have no way of knowing which side first claimed that its leader is 'the light'. In v15 we also have an explicit contrast between the Baptist and Jesus, and (as is frequently the case in the Fourth Gospel) the contrast is placed on the lips of John the Baptist himself.

The conflict with these followers of the Baptist was with another group which was probably of a size similar to or smaller than the Johannine Christians, whereas 'the Jews' represented the majority opinion in their community, and more importantly the opinions of its leaders[69], and for this reason the controversy with the baptists has not left its mark on the present form of the Fourth Gospel to anything like the extent that the conflict with 'the Jews' has affected it[70]. Yet it is still important that such passages as these, which relate to controversy with the baptists over the relationship between Jesus and John, be considered, if for no other reason that they give another clear indication of the fact that the development and formation of

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[67] In n.46 above we pointed to the particularly clear examples of Baruch 4:1; Sirach 24:23. See also Targum Neofiti to Deut.30:11-14 in relation to Baruch's use of the same passage in 3:29f; also note rabbinic passages such as *Sifre Deut.* on 11:10,§37; *Midr.Ber.R.*1:1,4. Torah is also identified with light (see references in W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, London: SPCK, 1955², p.148 n.2).

[68] See the discussion above.

[69] See the discussion in K. Wengst, *Bedrängte Gemeinde und verherrlichter Christus*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981; he writes of the Johannine community, "Sie lebt in einer national gemischten, aber von Juden dominierten Umwelt; das Judentum erscheint geradezu in behördlicher Machtstellung" (p.80). See also Kysar, *op.cit.*, p.359 for a suggestion on how these verses may have been relevant to the Johannine Christians' debate with their *Jewish* opponents.

[70] Of course, the debates about the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist may have influenced Johannine thought and beliefs in ways that are no longer known or accessible to us, but to speculate further on this subject would not appear to add anything to our study.

christological beliefs and categories often took place in the context of a contrast or comparison with another figure.

De la Potterie gives as one reason for rejecting the structure we have proposed for the prologue as the fact that the two halves of the structure are not really parallel, and the example which he gives is the difference tenses used of John's witness is vv6-8 (past) and v15 (present).[71] This can be explained, however, as being due to the fact that John thinks of the Baptist standing on the border, as it were, between two ages. If we are correct in our view that the Fourth Evangelist understood the incarnation to have taken place at Jesus' baptism,[72] then John can be said to have borne witness in both the pre-incarnation and post-incarnation periods. De la Potterie assumes that the coming of the Logos refers to the *birth* of Jesus, and thus has difficulty making sense of the Baptist's role in the prologue.[73] At any rate, it is perhaps unwise to make too much of the different tenses used to refer to the Baptist's testimony.

vv9-11) V9 may be read in two main ways: (a) "He was the true light, who lightens every man coming into the world"; (b) "The true light, that lightens every man, was coming into the world". Neither possibility is without difficulties, and both have parallels which may lend support to them. The reason for the ambiguity is that the participle ἐρχομενον may be taken either with ἠν and φως to create a periphrastic construction, 'was coming', or with ἀνθρωπον. Modern commentators are almost unanimous in preferring reading (b)[74]. In favour of (a), there is the parallel which is found in *Lev.R.* 31:6, "Thou enlightenest those who are on high and those who are beneath and all who come into the world"[75]. Although the apparent incongruity with the phrase immediately preceding (οὐκ ἠν ἐκεινος το φως...Ην το φως) is an obvious difficulty, it is not impossible that the author or redactor did not notice that the ην which opens v9 would most naturally be taken to refer back to John the Baptist, especially if he was splicing together two sources, a proto-Gospel and a hymnic or poetic composition. However, if the majority opinion of commentators is correct, and the phrase is intended to be read as a periphrastic construction, then this construction should not be taken (as in English) to mean 'was (on the point of) entering', since the Greek

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[71] de la Potterie, "Structure", p.356.

[72] On this point see our discussion of v14 below.

[73] *op.cit*, p.369.

[74] So e.g. Barrett, Beasley-Murray, Brown, Carson, Lindars, Painter, Schnackenburg.

[75] Cited by Barrett, *op.cit.*, p.160; Dodd, *op.cit.*, p.204 n.1. Barrett and Beasley-Murray both note that 'all who come into the world' is frequently used in the rabbinic writings with the sense 'every man'. The fact that the phrase does not actually use the word 'man' (*ish*, ανθρωπον) does not weaken the parallel.

construction most naturally conveys the idea of a *continuous* action in the past, rather than a single, carefully-delineated action or event. The reference would then almost certainly not be to the single event of the incarnation[76], but to the frequent comings of the light into the world throughout its history[77]. At any rate, as Beasley-Murray points out, both interpretations of the verse are possible, and would make sense at this juncture of the prologue, and thus it is difficult to come down firmly on the side of one or the other[78]. Ultimately, it is clear that the verse refers to the light, and that this true light illuminates every human being. If any factor is suggestive of a solution, it may be the fact that the parallel section of the prologue (v14) refers to the incarnation, the decisive coming of the Logos into the world.[79]

However, even if every human being has in some sense received life and light from the Logos, in another sense the majority of human beings have refused these things from him. The idea found in vv10-11 has parallels in both Jewish and pagan writers: Reason or Wisdom has been rejected by most people; Wisdom has not found a place to dwell. The reference in v10 to the κοσμος is intended to encompass a wider reference than τα ιδια in v11: the former is the entirety of the world which came into existence through the mediation of the Logos, whereas the latter is clearly a reference to the Jewish nation and people, who were God's chosen ones[80]. Thus on the one hand John is accepting the Old Testament teaching that Israel is God's chosen people, while on the other hand subverting the way this teaching was understood by a great many people in his time. Israel had been chosen by God, but even so had not responded to God as they should have. John transposes the Wisdom myth in a fashion similar to a number of other sectarian and reform movements in early Judaism, so that we do not hear of Wisdom dwelling in Israel, but rather being rejected in Israel, although

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[76] Contra Barrett, *op.cit.*, p.161. The other examples of periphrastic constructions cited by Pryor, *op.cit.*, p.204, appear to support our interpretation better than his.

[77] Cf. Talbert, *Reading John*, p.69; Lindars, *op.cit.*, p.78. I am grateful to Eryl Rowlands for this point.

[78] Beasley-Murray, *op.cit.*, p.12.

[79] Talbert, *Reading John*, p.66 (see the outline of his proposed structure above); also Culpepper, *op.cit.*, pp.13f; Boismard, *op.cit.*, p.98. Culpepper and Painter (*op.cit.*, p.462) simply regard these as two references to the incarnation, which detracts somewhat from the climactic nature of v14, which as we have noted above adds something new to the second half of the prologue. On the Word as light, see also the discussion of Targum Neofiti to Exod.12:42 in McNamara 1972:104.

[80] Brown, *op.cit.*, p.10; Kysar, *op.cit.*, p.359. Other proposed suggestions are less convincing. For example, Pryor's view depends on the reference here already being to the Logos *incarnate* (*op.cit.*, pp.214-217). That John uses a different word than the LXX does not necessarily mean that he had a different *concept* in view.

accepted by some, both Jews and Gentiles.[81] In the context of the conflict which lies in the background of the Fourth Gospel, John seeks to communicate that, as so many Jews would acknowledge, Israel had frequently rejected Wisdom. By presenting Israel's rejection of Jesus as simply one example of this wider phenomenon, the suggestion that this rejection somehow discredits Jesus' claims is undermined.

v14) Over against a section which, however we translate v9, clearly refers to the rejection of the light by mankind as a whole and Israel in particular, in this verse we have a clear reference to the incarnation, and to the believing community ('we') which has welcomed the incarnate Word. The best rendering of the words ὁ λογος σαρξ ἐγενετο is probably that suggested by Barrett, "the Word came on the (human) scene - as flesh, man"[82]. The point is that it is none other than the Wisdom or Word of God, the true light, which has appeared on the scene of human history in a decisive and distinctive way: as the man Christ Jesus. The identification between Jesus and the Word is important for various reasons which have already been mentioned.

This verse contains an almost overwhelming number of allusions to the Old Testament and Jewish traditions. The reference to 'tabernacling' is almost universally acknowledged to be an allusion to the wisdom tradition, such as is attested to in Sirach 24:8, where God commands Wisdom to pitch her tent in Israel[83]. The term also recalls the *Shekinah*,[84] and this, together with the appearance of the related terms *Word* (Aramaic *Mêmra, Dibbûra*) and *glory* (Aramaic *yᵉqar*, Hebrew *kabôd*), suggests that the author intends the reader to recall these Jewish traditions[85].

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[81] On the Wisdom imagery underlying these verses see Talbert, *op.cit.*, p.72; Ashton, *op.cit.*, pp.7,15-17. The Johannine use of the motif appears to lie somewhere between the view that Wisdom was accessible to all and the view that Wisdom had found no dwelling on earth and so returned to heaven, where she was accessible only to a select few apocalyptic visionaries and mystics. For John, Wisdom appeared on earth in Jesus and has been made available to all, although the overall response to Wisdom's appearance was rejection. See further the parallels in 1 Enoch 42:2; Baruch 3:12 (cited Brown, *op.cit.*, p.523).

[82] Barrett, *op.cit.*, p.165. Although Barrett's rendering avoids certain connotations which are difficult to evade when using the traditional translation, in our discussion we will still use the phrase 'became/becoming flesh', since alternative phrases, if perhaps more accurately conveying what the author probably intended, are often so convoluted as to make their use awkward.

[83] For other OT parallels to this language see Brown, *op.cit.*, pp.32f.

[84] Not only do the roots of the two terms have essentially the same meaning, 'to dwell', but there is also a similarity of sound between the root *škn* and John's term εσκηνωσεν.

[85] The accumulation of so many terms of this sort in such a small space is hardly likely to be coincidental. On these terms see McNamara, *op.cit.*, especially p.104. An Aramaic original has been proposed, on the basis of these similarities, by A.Díez Macho ('El Logos y el Espiritu Santo', in *Atlantida* 1 (1963), p.389), who is cited by McNamara.

Here then, in what is recognized by most to be the climactic verse of the prologue[86], we find Jesus identified as the embodiment of all of these aspects of God[87] as flesh, as a human life. We have already seen the importance of the parallelism between the beginning and end of the prologue for justifying Jesus' exalted status and ability to reveal God. Here at the climax of the prologue we are given the basis for that parallelism: the Word has 'become flesh', and is now to be identified with the human being Jesus.

An important question to ask is *when* the Word was believed to have appeared in human history as flesh. This is not to question that the author identified the Word-become-flesh as *Jesus*, but to ask whether there is a particular event in Jesus' life at which point this was understood to have actually come to pass. The traditional answer, and the one which seems most obvious, is of course Jesus' *conception* through the Holy Spirit. Yet its very apparentness should make us cautious. The Fourth Gospel nowhere indicates knowledge of the tradition that Jesus was conceived through the Holy Spirit. The Johannine account of the life of Jesus begins with the 'baptism' of Jesus[88], and given the fact that terms like "Spirit, Wisdom and Logos were all more or less synonymous ways of speaking of God's outreach to man"[89], it has been suggested that a first-century reader of the Fourth Gospel would have understood the Word becoming flesh and the Spirit descending upon Jesus as descriptions of the same event[90]. This is significant, since there was

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[86] We have already given our reasons for disagreeing with Culpepper's suggestion that the centre of the prologue must also be its climax.

[87] To call them 'attributes' would be too impersonal, whereas to call them 'figures' might imply that they exist as separate entities from God. The intentional ambiguity of the terms must be retained. As McNamara writes, "[T]he targumists...remove anthropomorphisms, substituting references to the 'Word' (*Memra*), 'Glory' (*Yeqara, 'Iqar*) or 'Presence' (*Shekinah*; Aramaic: *Shekinta*) of the Lord when speaking of his relations with the world. In communicating his will to man we read of 'the Holy Spirit' or the *Dibbera* (Word) rather than the Lord himself. For a Jew, of course, these were merely other ways of saying 'the Lord'. They were reverential ways of speaking about the God of Israel" (McNamara, *op.cit.*, p.98). Like Philo's λογος, these terms could be God or not God depending on what was felt to be theologically correct in a given context.

[88] This is clearly the setting in which the opening narratives and discourses of the Fourth Gospel take place, even if, presumably for polemical reasons, the author does not actually mention that Jesus was baptized by John. See my "Johannine Christianity" (n.63 above). The Johannine omission of reference to Jesus' baptism in water by John does not affect our present point, since John still recounts the coming of the Spirit.

[89] Dunn, *op.cit.*, p.266. See also n.28 above.

[90] See the more detailed arguments of Fuller, "The Incarnation in Historical Perspective", in *Theology and Culture. Essays in Honor of A.T.Mollegen and C.L.Stanley* (ATRSup, 7), ed. W. Taylor Stevenson, 1976, p.60; Francis Watson, "Is John's Christology Adoptionist?", in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament. Studies in Christology in Memory of G.B.Caird*, ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, pp.113-124; Talbert, *op.cit.*, pp.74-77;

widespread agreement in Judaism, and unanimous agreement in Christianity, that the Messiah was a figure in whom God's Spirit was present a decisive way[91]. John could thus appeal to such traditions in order to support his claims concerning Jesus, by presenting Jesus as one so fully possessed by the Spirit or Word of God as to be wholly at one with it,[92] so that that which is attributed to the Logos may also legitimately be attributed to Jesus. Also, Jesus, as the incarnation of the Word or Spirit which spoke to Moses[93] would obviously bear a revelation superior to that brought by Moses[94]. The importance of this is that we see here clearly that the author and his community did not simply make use of any and every tradition which might conceivably support their case, but appealed to Scriptures and traditions which they, and in most cases their opponents as well, regarded as both authoritative and also relevant to the issue at hand.

vv12-13) This forms the central section of this passage, and although it cannot be said to be of central *importance* to the prologue, this should not be understood to mean that this section is of little significance. On the contrary, the idea of the righteous as children of God was of great significance in contemporary Jewish thought, as was the idea of Israel or the Israelites as God's son(s). Here the author is denying that natural birth or genealogical descent can make one a child of God[95]. We are thus once again in the presence of an emphatic assertion that being an Israelite without believing in God's messenger is of no value. Israel had frequently been punished because it failed to recognize God's messengers or appointed leaders for what they were[96]. In this central section, John warns his readers that even if one is an

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"Word Became Flesh"; and my "Johannine Christianity". The arguments of Boismard (*op.cit.*, pp.121-126) against this conclusion are unconvincing.

[91] See Isa.11:2 (also the Targum to this verse and to Isa.42:1-4); 11Q13:17; Ps.Sol.17:37; 18:7; 1 Enoch 49:3; 66:2. There are also a number of passages in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, at least some of which may be pre-Christian. For Christian texts see the account of the Spirit's descent upon Jesus, present in all four Gospels, and further references such as Matt.12:28; Luke 4:14,18.

[92] A neuter pronoun is used here not to suggest that these were necessarily thought of as impersonal, but to avoid the (gender-specific and thus potentially offensive) pronouns 'he' and/or 'she'.

[93] See e.g. Targum Ps.-Jon. to Exod.33:16; Targum Neofiti and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Num.7:89.

[94] A point made unambiguously in v17.

[95] What is now generally termed as 'covenantal nomism' is in view here. In addition to E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, London: SCM Press, 1977, see also Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Dallas: Word, 1988, pp.lxiv-lxxii.

[96] Moses was a particularly relevant example of such an instance, and throughout the first few centuries of Christian literature the fact that both Moses and Jesus were rejected by God's

Israelite, one must be alert, lest one fail to recognize God's chosen one and to respond in faith to him. There is a clear contrast implied between v11 and v12: those who are the Logos' (and God's) 'own people' *should* be sons of God, but they have, as so often throughout their history, rejected the one whom God sent, thus showing themselves not to be God's children[97].

Conclusion: The Prologue in Johannine Legitimation

We have seen in our treatment of this section of the Fourth Gospel how a number of key motifs function, in the context of the prologue and of the Gospel as a whole, in ways that would be of great relevance to the proposed Johannine conflict situation, and it would scarcely be believable to suggest that all of these correspondences are accidental. Rather, we should regard the appearance of these motifs and emphases here as a key to understanding the whole Gospel. It has frequently been said that the author of the Fourth Gospel intends the whole of his book to be read in light of what is revealed to the reader in the prologue[98], and this is surely true not only of its high christology, but also of its apologetic and polemical aims and intentions.

The prologue begins and ends with the Word alongside God. The fact that the Word is now incarnate in the man Jesus has certain implications which the author points out to his readers, both through explicit statements and through his use of parallelism and allusion. Jesus is worthy of his exalted status at the Father's right hand, because he is in fact none other than the Word who was with God in the beginning. As such, he is also able to function in the capacity of revealer in a manner which cannot be equaled by any other. Other figures, whether John the Baptist or Moses, cannot compare with the honour and status of an only Son[99], nor can the written word of Torah compare with the Word who has now come 'in the flesh'. The failure of God's own people to accept the one whom he sent to them does not disprove Jesus' claims, since Israel had throughout its history rejected God's servants. Yet the few who believe, whether Israelites or not, are accepted by God, and their relationship with God as his children, made possible through

people, in spite of the signs which they did, was of great importance. See also Dale Allison, *The New Moses*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993, pp.98-105.

[97] See also the similar argument in John 8:41-47.

[98] Cf. e.g. Hooker, *op.cit.*, p.51; Barrett, *op.cit.*, p.156.

[99] Liddell and Scott note that the Greek term δοξα can mean both 'glory' in the sense of 'effulgence' or 'radiance', and also 'honour', 'reputation'. Although in the context of the manifestation of the one who is the Shekinah, the presence of God and the light, the former is obviously more relevant, 'honour' perhaps does better justice to the place of an only or beloved son in an ancient Mediterranean culture, although there is no English term which does justice to both meanings equally well. One may fruitfully compare the honour and dignity given to and value placed upon the paradigmatic μονογενης υιος of the Hebrew Bible, Isaac, although this is not to suggest that the author of the Fourth Gospel intended to make an allusion to Isaac here.

Jesus, validates his claims. The assertion that these were key issues for the Evangelist does not mean that the prologue is any less an exalted christological statement aimed at honouring and praising the incarnate and exalted Lord and the God whom he revealed. It is simply to point out that this appears to have been done in a context in which such christological statements and beliefs were controversial, and the author is thus concerned not only to state his christology, but also to defend it, and he does this by attempting to show the continuity of his beliefs with the authoritative traditions and Scriptures of the Jews and the Christians, as well as the culpability of 'the Jews' for failing to recognize who it was that had appeared among them, who it was whose glory they failed to see.

James F. McGrath

THE STRUCTURE OF REVELATION

by The Rev. Dr. GEORGE K. BARR

> This article uses scalometric techniques to provide an alternative to A.q.Morton's Cusum analysis of *Revelation*. The identification of internal scale changes must form an essential part of stylometric analysis, especially in the case of visionary material.

A.Q. Morton's stunning article on Revelation (*IBS* 19, 81-91) must shake us into reconsidering the structure of the work. His fitting together into codex form of the various sources which he has detected by Cusum analysis is little short of miraculous. It depends, of course, upon the validity of the Cusum method which he says "has been widely used and repeatedly validated". He does not provide any evidence in terms of Cusum data, and one must assume that Morton has followed the procedures described in Jill Farringdon's book[1] to which he refers.

The Cusum Method
The method described therein involves the comparison between graphical traces based on variations in sentence length and similar traces based on the rate of occurrence of selected features. The most common feature used in the book is a combination of the occurrences of two- and three-letter words plus other words beginning with a vowel. Experiment shows that in Revelation these components taken separately behave erratically. In fact, both are scale-sensitive. Two- and three-letter words in Revelation are slightly high-scale sensitive as they tend to occur more often in longer sentences; initial vowel words are slightly low-scale sensitive as they tend to occur more often in shorter sentences. In combination, these tendencies substantially cancel each other out and the combination behaves more consistently than the components do separately. This combination (2/3lw+ivw) has therefore been used in tests described below.

Implications for Revelation
To accept Morton's page plan for Revelation involves the acceptance of his alleged combination of sources, and there is a heavy price to pay in

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[1] Jill M. Farringdon, *Analysing for Authorship*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996. I have criticised the Cusum method in my review of this book in the article entitled *The Cusum Mechanism* published in the journal *Expert Evidence*, Volume 5(4). G.K.B.

terms of credibility which is seen when one considers the points at which sections are joined. The plan requires acceptance of the following:

1. The Letters to the Seven Churches, which have a most unusual epistolary form, do not all come from the same source. The seven churches are specified at length in 1:11-20 but it is claimed that only five of the letters come from this source; the other two are said to come from a different source.

2. The plagues of the seven seals do not all come from the same source. Six come from one source (the one which introduces the seven plagues) but the seventh plague comes from a different source.

3. Of the seven angels mentioned in 8:6, four come from one source and the remainder from another.

4. Half of the proclamation of the power of God and of Christ in 12:10-12 comes from one source and half from another.

5. The taunt song of Chapter 18 is divided into three parts, allegedly from different sources, even though the first division at v.10/11 occurs in the middle of a series (kings/ merchants/ shipmasters who are all dependent on the wealth of Babylon). The second division at v. 21/22 occurs in the middle of a series of rhythmic verses with a recurring motif.

6. Chapters 21-22 on the New Heaven and the New Earth are divided into five sections. The introduction 21:1-8 is divided between two sources. The specification of the Holy City 21:9-21 is divided between two sources. After 22:21 there is another change of source.

Testing the Cusum Method in Revelation

To determine whether Cusum analysis really does justify these unlikely divisions I prepared Cusum graphs of the texts straddling each of the junctions of these sections. Trials were made using Morton's "modified full stop sentences" which divide the text at every full stop, colon and interrogation mark, and where appropriate I checked the effect of using full stop sentences. Graphs were prepared using both Morton's method of scaling graphs according to the range of cumulative sum values and alternatively using the percentage occurrence of the features. As indicated above the combination of two- and three-letter words and initial vowel words was used.

At none of the junctions was there any clear sign of differences between sections, though frequently anomalies were noted within sections. Samples of 500 words were taken from the two main alleged sources to determine whether there was a significant difference in the rates of occurrence of these features. The results are as follows:

SOURCE	TEXT	%AGE 2/3LW+IVW
1	1:7-2:9a	70.6%
1	11:11b-12:10	70.8%
2	12:11-13:14a	71.4%
2	21:22-22:19a	69%

It will be seen that the rates of occurrence in Source 2 straddle those found in the samples from Source 1. Variations in these rates of occurrence can not therefore be used to distinguish between the two alleged sources if indeed the difference between sources is a matter of each source having a different habit in the use of these features.

In view of these findings it is necessary to question again the validity of the Cusum method. Not everyone accepts this method which is explained in Jill Farringdon's book *Analysing for Authorship*. It does, I believe, sometimes produce the right answer; it may also produce very wrong answers.

Two Important Decisions

Cumulative sum graphs are a valuable tool with many useful and proved applications in the fields of commerce and science. When they are used in the examination of the structure of literature two important decisions must be made.

The first concerns the definition of a sentence. Morton uses "modified full stop sentences" (MFSSs) in which the text is divided at every colon, full stop and interrogation mark. This appeals to statisticians as by dividing the text up into short sections it behaves in a rather more statistically normal fashion. Sentence lengths, however, have never been statistically normal in their distribution which is always skewed. The fragments of text created in this way have no consistent syntactical rationale. Some are whole sentences; some are clauses or phrases; others may not even have a verb. The penalty to be paid is the loss of important scale-related features which are characteristic of individual authors. Using MFSSs destroys important evidence. The alternative is to use full stop sentences (FSSs). Of course, the original Greek texts were not punctuated and we have to rely on punctuation provided by modern editors. Comparison of several editions of the Greek New Testament shows that there is, in fact, a large measure of agreement regarding the main stops. Full stop sentences are complete syntactically. Occasionally a choice has to be made between a full stop and a colon, but attention to the scale of the context usually enables a rational decision to be made. This preserves the

scale-related textual patterns which must be considered in questions of authorship.

The second decision concerns the method of scaling graphs when the occurrence of particular features is compared with the underlying sentence pattern (which forms the basis of Morton's Cusum method). The logical way of doing this is to use the percentage occurrence of the selected feature. That is, if variations in the occurrence of initial vowel words are being compared with variations in sentence length, and initial vowel words comprise 30% of the text, then the scale representing variations in the occurrence of initial vowel words should be 30% of the scale representing variations in sentence length (in terms of words per inch). This places them in a meaningful relationship.

Morton adopts another approach. He scales the two traces so that the highest and lowest points of each trace are the same distance apart in the combination graph. This forces the two traces into a rough correspondence and Cusum analysis is based on the portions where the traces do not match but create "anomalies". In almost every case this results in a **mismatch of scales**. By manipulating scales it is possible to make traces coincide at **any** chosen point. Separation between traces occurs when sources with different characteristics are mixed; the different characteristics may be due to multiple authorship or may be due to internal differences of genre or scale within the work of one author - the Cusum method can not distinguish between these. Mismatching the scales results in these separations becoming distorted. The anomalies may appear in the wrong place or may be partly eliminated leaving only a fortuitous portion of the separation. On such irrational, fortuitous portions the Cusum practitioner may base his interpretation.

The combination of MFSSs and scaling according to the Cusum ranges can result in very misleading distortions. Fig. 1 shows graphs of Rev. 21:5-22:5 in which the occurrences of two- and three-letter words plus initial vowel words are compared with the sentence pattern. These features comprise 65.48% of the text and this figure is used to determine the appropriate scale in the two graphs on the left hand side. It is seen that the displacement in the top graph in which full stop sentences were used is very similar to that in the lower left graph in which MFSSs were used. These traces truly reflect variations in the occurrences of these features in that text.

The two graphs on the right are scaled according to the ranges of Cusum values (following Morton). These values are 53.13% when full stop sentences are used and no less than 81.77% when MFSSs are used. It is irrational to use these figures to determine scales. The lower right hand
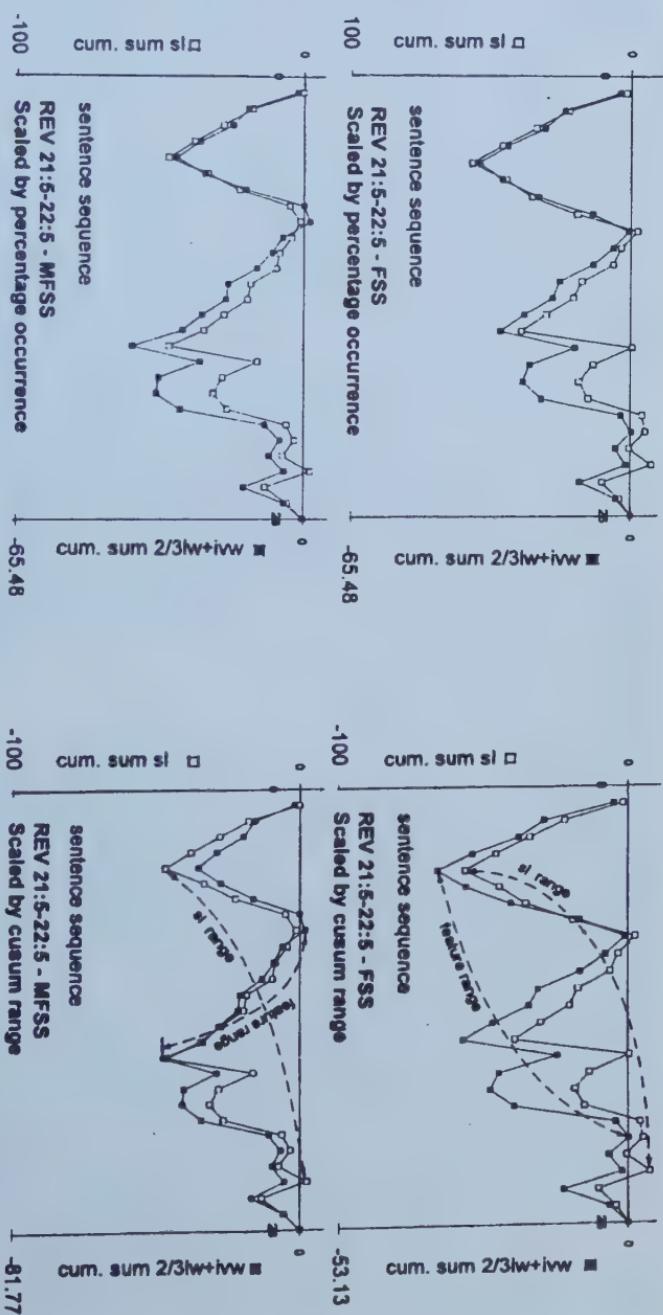
Fig. 1 The two graphs on the left are scaled by percentage occurrence of the feature. Anomalies appear in the same areas when either FSSs or MFSSs are used in sentence definition.

The two graphs on the right are scaled according to the ranges of cusum values. Anomalies appear in **different areas** depending on which sentence definition is used. The two colons in this chapter treated as full stops are enough to make the difference shown in these graphs. The correspondence in the middle section in the lower right hand graph is fortuitous and meaningless as the scales are mis-matched. This is the system used by Morton.

graph shows the distortion produced by a combination of MFSSs and scaling by Cusum range. The apparent correspondence of the two traces in the middle part of the graph is fortuitous and meaningless and results from the mismatching of scales. This is the combination most frequently used by Morton.

The apparent correspondence is illusory and many examples of similar illusions are to be found in Jill Farringdon's book *Analysing for Authorship* - for example on pages 68 and 182. This is not to say that Cusum analysis always gives the wrong answer. Sometimes when a mixed text comprises work by two authors who do have different characteristics in the use of these test features, the differences do show up and Cusum method may give the right answer. But where different authors overlap in their characteristics, Cusum can not distinguish between them.

What mostly reduces my confidence in the method is the fact that by simply selecting passages with similar characteristics, texts by different authors may be seamlessly joined to provide Cusum graphs which appear to indicate perfect homogeneity. In this way it can be "proved" that the author of Philemon was the late Prof. J.S. Stewart. I repeat - scaling by means of Cusum ranges mismatches the scales and combined with the use of MFSSs results in fortuitous and meaningless separations. On these Cusum method is founded.

The Structure of Revelation

What then may be said of the structure of Revelation?

In the first place, I would make a strong plea for the integrity of the Letters to the Seven Churches. These have an unusual epistolary form. They take their form firstly from the long initial sentence which begins 'To the angel of the church in...'. The second sentence also has a standard beginning, 'I know your works/tribulation/where you dwell...'. The conclusion also has a standard form, though in some letters the last two verses come in reverse order. One sentence begins, 'To him who conquers...' or 'He who conquers...': the other begins, 'He who has an ear...'. Between these standard formulae at the beginning and at the end, a special message for each church is enclosed. It is probably a form devised by one author for a particular purpose and not an epistolary form in general use. Graphs of these seven letters show a certain amount of order. It was suggested to me some years ago by a member of staff at Edinburgh University that a similar kind of order might be found in items by newspaper leader writers. I bought seven newspapers one day and found that this was not so. Fig. 2 shows the patterns of seven articles by leader writers all written on the same day. These have been scaled to a common

base in order to compare the shapes. There is no detectable common pattern. Fig. 3 shows the seven letters from Revelation, also drawn on a common base; clearly there is a much greater sense of order in these.

When the graphs are scaled to a common base, scaling differences are eliminated and the letters to Ephesus, Pergamum and Smyrna are seen to be similar in form. A second sub-group includes the letters to Philadelphia, Thyatira and Sardis which according to Morton come from two different sources. These are shown separately in Fig. 4. The letter to Laodicaea is rather different, but still shares some of the common features. One can not "prove" authorship from the shapes of graphs, but having examined graphs of over half a million words of works in Greek, Latin and modern English over a period of thirty years, it seems unlikely to me that the letters to Thyatira and Sardis come from a different source from that of the letter to Philadelphia as Morton suggests. It is, of course, possible that someone found five letters and imitated their peculiar epistolary form in adding the two missing letters. However, it is not as easy as might be expected to produce a common graphical pattern in this way.

Secondly, it should be appreciated that Revelation is visionary material and does not lend itself to analysis in terms of main- and sub-sections and intermezzos, though some scholars have tried to force the text into such a structure (e.g. F. Palmer in *The Drama of the Apocalypse,* 1905). Revelation may rather be compared to the sermons of James S. Stewart which often could not be divided into a number of "points". The structure which gave his sermons form and power was based on an irregular rhythm in which small scale sections alternated with large scale sections. Stewart's method of preaching was to take a human situation and examine it in short, terse sentences, at a very domestic scale level. Then he would take that human situation and set it in the light of God's holiness. At that point the structure of his text changed dramatically, and he used the most extraordinarily long sentences. This irregular rhythm of low-scale and high-scale sections persists throughout his preaching. The low-scale sections have low average sentence length; the high-scale sections have great numinous content and a high average sentence length. Fig. 5 shows the graph of his sermon "O Man, Greatly Beloved" from *The Gates of New Life* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1938). The monumental, numinous passages appear as great slashes in the graph. The average sentence length of these passages is 90 words, compared with about 15 words for the remainder of the text. This phenomenon also appears in the writings of John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle, where very long sentences are associated with numinous content.
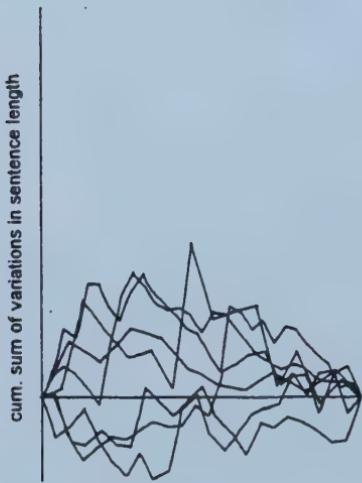
Fig. 2 Cumulative sum graphs of leading articles from seven newspapers appearing on 28th January, 1994. These do not show any detectable common pattern.
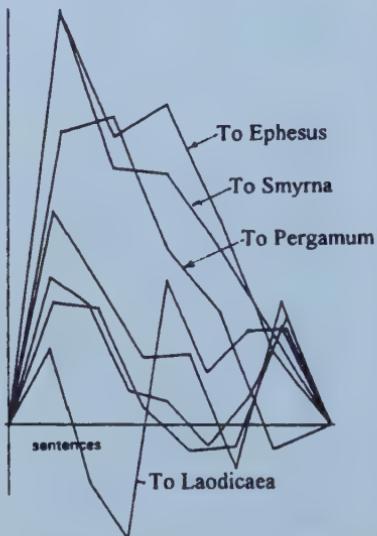
Fig. 3 Cumulative sum graphs of the Letters to Seven Churches drawn on a common base. Common features are due to the use of an unusual epistolary form.

COMPARISON OF GRAPHS:

LETTERS TO SEVEN CHURCHES

AND SEVEN LEADING ARTICLES
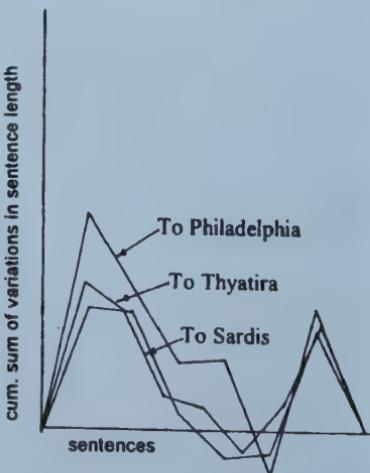
Fig. 4 The letters to Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia provide similar patterns.

It is found too in Revelation. The most significant monumental, numinous passages are listed in the table below and are shown with a heavy line in Fig. 6.

|	Subject	Text	No. of sentences	Average length
A	Vision of Christ	1:9-20	7	39.4
B	Heavenly worship	4:1-11	8	36.6
C	Song of creatures and elders	5:8-13	3	59.7
D	Day of wrath	6:12-17	2	67.5
E	The 144,000 and the Multitude	7:1-12	5	55.2
F	The trumpets	8:7-10:7	24	36.5
G	Angel messages	14:6-11	4	45
H	Taunt Song	18:1-24	15	42

The average sentence length of these monumental passages is 42 words; the average sentence length of the remainder of the text is just under 24 words. In other isolated cases, the inclusion of songs results in very long sentences, but those listed above show a monumentality which is usually associated with a sense of the numinous. Perhaps the numinous quality is less evident in the taunt song of Chapter 18, but this is a sustained high-scale passage and must be a unity.

Revelation, then, is not structured like a 'three-point' sermon. It is more like Stewart's preaching, coming from the heart in an irregular rhythm of low-scale and high-scale passages. The variation in scale is a reflection of the preacher's feelings, and of his sense of the numinous. This type of preaching has variety and power through the preacher constantly slipping from a low-scale mode into a high-scale monumental, numinous mode, and back again into a more domestic mode. These modes involve changes of genre and scale which must be taken into account in any stylometric analysis of the text.

AUTHOR: JAMES S. STEWART

TITLE: *O Man, Greatly Beloved*

ASL: 19.34 Words: 3172 Sentences: 164

Give the experience of God its due name (222 words)

Wait quietly upon God (88)

Meet God face to face (88)

In the light of Jesus (86)

Love coming into your life (42+57)

Fear and trust God (61+37+131)
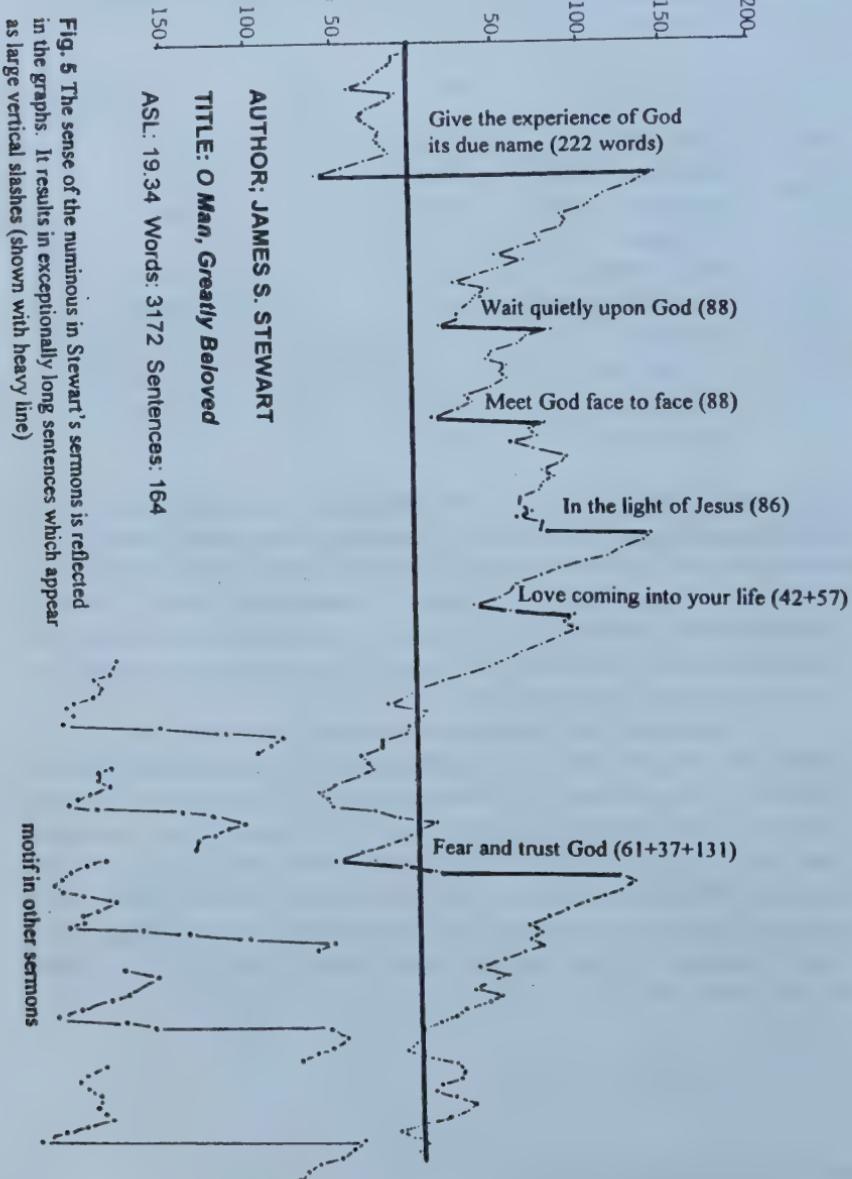
Fig. 5 The sense of the numinous in Stewart's sermons is reflected in the graphs. It results in exceptionally long sentences which appear as large vertical slashes (shown with heavy line)

motif in other sermons
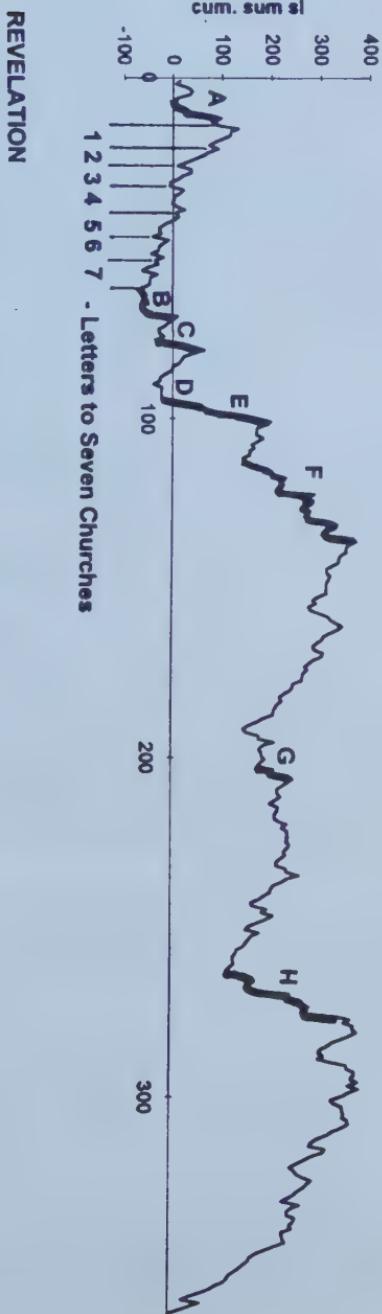
Fig. 6 Cumulative sum graph of Revelation. The Letters to Seven Churches show common features (see Figs. 3 and 4 for detail) and are low-scale. The high-scale sections with numinous content are shown in heavy line.

Conclusion

I am glad to acknowledge my debt to A.Q. Morton whose work in the 1960s kindled my interest in the structure of literature. However, I find technical faults in the graphical practices used in the Cusum method and can not accept these conclusions regarding Revelation. The evidence suggests that the proposed divisions arise from an assumption that the text was bound in a particular codex form rather than vice versa. No account is taken of variations in genre and scale which must form an important part of stylometric investigation. On balance I think it likely that the text of Revelation as we now have it, is substantially as it was first written.

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THE THEME OF LAND IN GENESIS 1-11 AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE ABRAHAM NARRATIVE. (PART II)

Dr. James McKeown

The Abraham Narrative

The pattern of punishment in relation to land in Gen 1-11 provides a link with the Abraham narratives since the pattern that emerges is virtually the reverse of that found in the primeval history. The main focus of attention on land in the primeval narrative is on its use as a means of punishing evil doers. The movement is from possession of land to expulsion as a result of alienation from God. The reverse is the case in the Abraham narrative where emphasis is on the harmonious relationship between God and the patriarch. In this context, the role of land changes; it is no longer a medium for punishment (at least not for Abraham) but a symbol of blessing and the movement of the narrative is towards possession.

The first nine references to land in the Abraham cycle are in chapter 12. God commands Abraham to leave his land and to go to another land which God will show him (12:1). Abraham sets out for the land of Canaan and arrives in that land (12:5). Abraham passes through the land (12:6). The Canaanites are in the land (12:6). Yahweh promises Abraham 'To your descendants I will give this land' (12:7). There is a famine in the land; the famine in the land is severe (12:10).

The principle laid down in 1-11, that God exercises his right as creator of the earth, to locate human beings on earth wherever he wishes and then to relocate them if necessary, is applied here again. God placed Adam in Eden and later drove him out of that place (2:8; 3:24). Now he calls Abraham out of his homeland and places him in Canaan (12:1, 5). But there are important differences; Abraham is not simply 'placed' and 'driven' like Adam. The change from 'land expelling history' to 'land anticipating history', requires a change to 'less coercive language'.[1]

However, there is more than just a change of language in 12:1. There is a transition from the primeval history where the focus is on all humankind and the earth as a whole to the patriarchal narratives where God deals with

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[1] See W. Brueggemann, *The Land*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) 17.

an individual and his descendants in terms of a particular land[2]. Furthermore, the emphasis in chapters 1-11 is on how the tripartite relationship between God, humankind and land deteriorated but in chapters 12-50 the movement is towards harmonious relations between the family line of Abraham and God which will culminate in the possession of land.

The call of Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 does not contain an explicit promise of land. However, there is an implicit promise since Abraham is to go to a **land** where God will bless. Why, then, is the promise of land merely implicit in the programmatic promises of 12:1-3? Tsevat argues that land is not the most prominent promise because its realisation is in the future. [3] However, this is not an adequate explanation since the other promises also concern the future. Possibly the narrator wants to delay any guarantee of land until after Abraham responds in obedience. Whereas in the earlier chapters of Genesis (1-11) man lost land because of disobedience, Abraham receives land because of obedience. This is why the promise of land is not explicit in 12:1; it is not made explicit until after the account of Abraham's obedience. Thus, in the Abraham Cycle the narrative movement is towards land through obedience and promise.

Abraham's first act in passing through the land is followed by the poignant remark that 'At that time the Canaanites were in the land' (12:6). The negative comment about the land being inhabited by Canaanites builds up tension in the narrative and prepares the reader for the explicit promise to Abraham that follows immediately that God will give the land to Abraham's descendants (12:7):
It is interesting that the first explicit promise of land is made to Abraham's descendants and not to him personally (12:7). The narrator seems to be unfolding the promises related to land gradually. At first the promise of land is just hinted at (12:1), then it is promised to Abraham's descendants (12:7), but, later in chapter 13 the promise of land will be made explicit to Abraham personally (13:15-17). It is a promise which opens up to Abraham in accordance with his expressions of obedience and faith. Abraham responds to this promise of land for his descendants by building two altars, one at Shechem (12:7) and one between Bethel and Ai (12:8).

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[2] See Procksch, op. cit., 96.

[3] M Tsevat , 'Hagar and the Birth of Ishmael', *The Meaning of the Book of Job and Other Biblical Studies. Essays on the Literature and Religion of the Hebrew Bible,*(New York, 1980, 53)

These would serve as monuments in honour of God who has claimed the right over this land and promises to give it to Abraham's posterity.

Closely linked with the building of the altar is a reference to Abraham pitching his tent (12:8). Wenham suggests that the reason why Abraham's tent is referred to here, while there is no reference to it during the journey from Haran, is to indicate that he stays in this area a long time.[4] While this is feasible, this first reference to pitching a tent seems to be quite significant since it is referred to again (13:3). Perhaps, the close association of the tent and the altar (12:8; 13:18; 26:25) is important for theological reasons and is not a reference to Abraham's domestic arrangements. This is the view taken by D. J. Wiseman who commenting on 12:7, writes,

> Here the first reference is made to the erection of a tent, which
> may indicate that this refers not so much to his mode of living as
> the setting up of a tent-shrine to mark his acceptance of the
> divine land-grant, a form of token take-over of the promised
> land.[5]

Wiseman's approach has the advantage that it explains why there is no mention of Abraham pitching his tent during the long journey from Haran to Canaan. The tent is mentioned, not as a place to live but as an acknowledgement that Abraham has been granted land by the deity.

The famine in Canaan and Abraham's sojourn in Egypt (12:10-20)

The negative comment about the land in verse 6 with its reference to the Canaanites is now followed by a further negative statement indicating that there is a famine in Canaan (12:10). The repeated mention of the famine both at the beginning and end of this verse and the description of the famine as כבד effectively clears Abraham of any blame in his decision to leave the 'promised land'.[6] Indeed the question is not whether he will leave this promised land but whether he will return, since doubts are cast on both its availability and its dependability. That Abraham does eventually return to Canaan is not a further expression of faith in God's

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[4] Wenham, op. cit., 280.

[5] 'Abraham Reassessed', p. 141, in A. R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman eds. *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives,* Leicester: IVP., 1980.

[6] So, Cassuto (op. cit., 346), Skinner (op. cit., 248), Wenham (op. cit., 287) and A. P. Ross (*Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis,* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988 p. 275). There may even be a hint that the famine is judgement because of the sins of the Canaanites. At any rate, Abraham is not guilty at this stage.

promises but is due to the eviction order issued by Pharaoh (12:19-20). So, even though Abraham's journey to Egypt is understandable, his return to Canaan is not as honourable as his first encounter with that country; his return is precipitated by circumstances that are brought about and carefully controlled by God.

The Separation from Lot (13:1-18)

Abraham's return to Canaan is marked by a second reference to the earlier worship at the altar between Bethel and Ai (13:3-4). Abraham's relationship with God is now restored as is his status as a 'sojourner' in the land of promise. At this point a new crisis arises in relation to land. The land cannot support Abraham and Lot dwelling together (13:6). The land is already inhabited by Canaanites and Perizzites (13:7). Abraham suggests that they should separate and he offers Lot his choice of land (13:9). Lot chooses the Jordan valley (13:10) but Abraham dwells in the land of Canaan (13:12). Following this separation, Yahweh promises that all the land Abraham sees will belong to him and his descendants (13:15). Abraham's descendants will be as the dust of the earth (13:16). Yahweh commands Abraham to walk through the land and he promises, 'I will give it to you' (13:17).

To avoid this inadequacy of pasture in Canaan being taken as a criticism of the land itself, the reader is reminded that the limited space is due to the presence of Canaanites and Perizzites who are also dwelling in the land (13:7).[7] The strife that arises in Genesis 13 is specifically ascribed to the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot. Abraham is portrayed as totally opposed to the strife especially since he and Lot are 'brothers'. He calls for amicable separation and offers Lot the opportunity to choose the part of the country he prefers. Lot makes his choice on purely economic considerations. He knows nothing of the patient resignation of Abraham to accept the land that God will give him. His choice is governed by the needs of his livestock and his large entourage and the well-watered plains seem ideal. Abraham, in contrast, seems to have specific reasons for not choosing the Jordan valley; this is evident from the text. Abraham suggests, 'If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left' (13:9). Since directions were usually given facing east, Abraham was offering to go north or south but he does not entertain the idea of going east, the direction eventually chosen by his nephew. As Wenham points out it probably lies outside the land promised by God and

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[7] Cf. Dillmann op. cit., 24.

so Abraham sees his own choices limited to the area of land received in the earlier divine land-grant.[8]

Abraham's reaction to this crisis establishes him as a man of faith in relation to the land. He compares favourably with Adam (3:6, 17-24), Cain (4:1-16), the tower builders (11:1-9) and, of course, with Lot. Vogels notes this contrast and argues that Abraham makes an offering of the land (l'offrande de la terre) in a similar way as he is willing to offer Isaac (22:1-18). [9] Abraham's, 'sacrifice' of the land, is immediately followed by assurances that God will give it to him and his seed (13:14-15). This is the first occasion that the land is promised explicitly to Abraham. Compared to 12:7, where the land is promised only to Abraham's descendants, this represents a development of the promise of land.[10] Moreover, the words עד עולם represent an elaboration of the promise (13:15).[11] Abraham is encouraged to express faith in these promises and at the same time to claim the land by walking throughout its length and breadth (13:17).

The Land Promised Under Oath (15:7-21).

So far we have observed three progressive stages in the promises of land.

1. God will show Abraham the land (12:1).

2. Abraham's posterity will possess the land (12:7).

3. The land is promised to Abraham as well as to his offspring for an eternal possession (13:15).

In chapter 15 the promise of land reaches a further stage in its development as it becomes the first promise to be confirmed by an oath. There is a clear division in subject matter in this chapter with verses 1-6 dealing mainly with the promise of a son and heir, and verses 7-21 concentrating on the promise of land, which is confirmed by an oath. However, the two sections are linked together by the statement about Abraham's faith (verse 6). As we have seen already, the promises of land to Abraham seem to follow acts of obedience or faith. The expression of

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[8] Wenham op. cit., 297.

[9] W. Vogels, 'Abraham et l ' Offrande de la Terre', *Sciences Religiouses,* 4 (1974) 58-65.

[10] Cf. Procksch, op. cit., 105. Westermann, on the other hand, argues that 13:15 does not represent a development in the promise of land since, 'when one concedes to the promise of the land the independence that it has in the history of tradition, then each land-promise text is to be understood from the overall context of the motif in all its various expressions' Westermann, op. cit., 1986, 179. However, Westermann's argument does not alter the fact that from a synchronic perspective the promise of land in 13:15 does contain an additional element and can be viewed as a development of the promise of land in a literary sense.

[11] Cf. Dillmann op. cit., 27-28.

faith in verse 6 sets the context for a further affirmation of the promise of land.

> I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess (verse 7).

Abraham's response to this promise (15:8) must be understood in the light of the increasing momentum of the promise of land. In the land, Abraham has access to much of it and benefits from its resources. But the land does not belong to him and others have prior claims to it and jurisdiction over it (cf.12:6; 13:7). In substance Abraham's question is, 'How can land that is occupied and owned by others become mine?' This is not lack of faith but a search for a deeper understanding of the promise of land rising out of Abraham's desire to believe

Abraham faces the task of driving away the birds of prey which probably 'foreshadow the difficulties involved in taking possession of the land'.[12] A deep sleep (15:12) leaves Abraham powerless to protect the land. Like Adam (2:21) he is removed from his duties and rendered helpless.[13] Deep dread and darkness fall upon him, presumably because he can now do nothing to ward off the 'birds of prey' (15:12). He is warned that the occupation of Canaan by his descendants will be preceded by a period of enslavement in a foreign land (15:13). Eventually, the nation that enslaves them will be punished (15:14), and Abraham's descendants will be released from the foreign land with great possessions (15:14). On a more personal level, Abraham is assured that he will die in peace (15:15). His descendants will return to the land of promise, which will be given to them when the sins of the Amorites has reached a certain point (15:16). Finally, the covenant of land is solemnised; the borders of the promised land are delineated, and the list of the present inhabitants is given (15:18-21).

The significance of this passage for the theme of land, lies firstly in the fact that the promise is now made by God under oath, and secondly, in the clear display of divine authority reminiscent of the creation event. The same God who brought a deep sleep (תרדמה) on Adam is now at work in relation to Abraham, the land of Canaan and the present and future inhabitants of that land. As in Genesis 1-11, God allocates land to people (cf. Adam in the Garden of Eden, 2:15). He can terminate the tenancy of any person or nation when their sin reaches a certain level (cf. Adam, 3:24;

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[12] Cf. Dillmann op. cit., 62.

[13] The rare word תרדמה is used in both stories to describe the deep sleep.

Cain, 4:12; mankind, 6:7). As Westermann writes, 'God's action in history allows both for the gift of land and expulsion from it'.[14]

The passage also addresses the moral questions concerning the Canaanites. In particular how could God promise land to the patriarchs on which other people are already living? (12:7-8). As Clines remarks, the promise of land is 'good news for Hebrews but bad news for Canaanites'![15] According to this passage, the removal of the original inhabitants from Canaan is a consequence of their rebellion against God. It is punishment in the same terms as those already outlined in chapters 1-11 (cf. 15:16). The decision to remove the Canaanites is one taken by the creator on the same basis as his decision to expel Adam (3:24), cause Cain to wander (4:11-12), remove mankind by a flood (6:7) or scatter the tower builders (11:8). In all these cases the action taken is in response to the sinful behaviour of human beings and the implication is that the same applies to the Canaanites.[16]

The Promise of Land in the Covenant with Abraham (17:8)
The main themes in chapter 17 are 'Descendants' and 'Blessing'. The former is developed in terms of a special line of descent (17:7, 9-19, 21) and the latter in the promise of a multitude of offspring (17:2, 5, 6, 16, 20). Although land is mentioned in one verse only (8), it is, nevertheless, highlighted as a key promissory element in the covenantal relationship. As Abraham's relationship with God deepens, the promise of land is also developed. Nothing essentially new is added to the promise of land but new terminology is introduced; Canaan is promised as an 'everlasting possession' for Abraham and his progeny. This is the first appearance of אחזה in Genesis, but it is used later in Genesis to refer to the legal possession of Machpelah (23:9, 20; 49:30; 50:13), and it also appears in connection with tenure of land in Leviticus, Numbers and Joshua (Lev 14:34; 25:23, 24, 34; 27:16, 22, 24; Num 27:4, 7; 32:5, 22, 29; 35:28; Josh 21:12, 41 [Heb 39]; 22:4, 9, 19). The description 'land of your sojourning' emphasises that Abraham has no legal claim to the land but 'everlasting possession' suggests an incontrovertible right to the land. As

[14] Westermann op. cit., 1986, 262.

[15] Clines op. cit., 56-7.

[16] J. G. McConville, 'The Shadow of the Curse; a "Key" to OT Theology', *Evangel* 3 (1985)3.

G. W. Coats suggests, this represents 'a transformation of a land for strangers . . . into a permanent possession'.[17]

The Theme of Land and the Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (18:16-19:29)

Yahweh's authority to give land or to take it away is demonstrated in this passage in the following ways. The narrative emphasises God's role as judge of the earth (18:17-19). This is a continuation of one of the main emphases in chapters 1-11. God is in control of the earth and its inhabitants are responsible to him for their behaviour on the land he has given them.[18] God reveals to Abraham that he intends to destroy the cities because of their wickedness (18:21-23). This is a similar situation to that faced by Noah (6:13) but here the judgement is localised. Abraham cannot question God's jurisdiction but he does tentatively question his methods. Will God destroy the righteous along with the wicked (18:25)?

The removal of Lot from Sodom (19:12-17) is effected for entirely different reasons than the expulsion of Adam from Eden (3:24), but the same principle applies to both situations; God exercises his right as creator and his role as judge to allocate people to a certain territory and to relocate them as necessary. Here Lot is removed from the cities and given the hillside (19:17). Not happy with this, he asks permission to go to Zoar. In the past he had chosen his own land (13:11), now he must acknowledge that only God can choose.

It is interesting that included in the details of the destruction of the cities, the destruction of the ground and its crops is also mentioned (19:25). This is particularly significant since the destruction of nothing else is singled out for special mention except cities and their inhabitants (19:25). This detail shows the importance of land and its produce as a gift of the creator that may be removed as a result of sin.

So, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah reiterates the message of chapters 1-11 in terms of the creator's jurisdiction over the earth. The principle that unrighteous people can expect to lose their land is established, not just to explain the destruction of ancient cities, but also to show how God can encourage Abraham's descendants to lay claim to a land that is already inhabited by others (12:6; 13:7). If God permits the

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[17] G. W. Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, Grand Rapids: Eerdnmans, 1983, 134.

[18] See Procksch, op. cit., 124.

destruction of the Canaanites, then it is because they have been unrighteous (cf. 15:16).

The Abraham and Abimelech Narrative and the Connection with the Theme of Land (20:1-18; 21:22-34).

In the story of Abimelech's abduction of Sarah, God appears again in his role as Judge (20:3). Abimelech is threatened with death because he has taken Abraham's wife (20:2-3). The king protests that he and his people are righteous (20:4). Abimelech's plea of innocence is upheld, and he and his people are acquitted (20:6). The interesting result of this is that he can refer to the land as 'my land' (20:15). Although this is the land promised to Abraham, it remains Abimelech's land at this stage.[19] Abimelech exercises his right as owner of the land and invites Abraham, not just to sojourn in his land but to dwell in it.

This is the counterpart of the Sodom and Gomorrah story. These cities were destroyed because less than 10 righteous people were found in them (8:32). Because Abimelech and his people are innocent, they do not lose their land. The principle presented here is that God is a righteous judge and he will continue to provide righteous people with land. Only the unrighteous should fear lest their land be taken from them (cf. 3:24).

A second episode concerning Abraham and Abimelech is related after the story of Isaac's birth (21:22-34). Abraham negotiates with Abimelech about territory and especially about access to water (21:25). Although Abraham is promised that he and his offspring are being given this land, he must acknowledge the rights of those who already live there. God has made a covenant to give this land to Abraham (15:18), but Abraham must also make a covenant with the present inhabitants (21:32). This point is emphasised in verse 34: 'Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines'. Thus, the right of the Philistines to own the land at this stage is acknowledged.

Abraham and the Purchase of Land from the Hittites (23:1-20).

A crisis regarding land arises after the death of Sarah, because, as yet, Abraham did not own any land and has nowhere to bury his wife. In spite of the fact that he has been promised the land, Abraham must negotiate with the Hittites for the possession of a burial plot. The reaction of the Hittites is to insist that Abraham does not need to own property in order to

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[19] Cf. Ross op. cit., 367.

bury his dead since they will make their choicest sepulchres available to him (23:6). This seems a very generous offer but a number of commentators think that it is really an attempt to prevent Abraham from owning property.[20]

Abraham's rejoinder to the offer of the Hittites is to make a proposal that he purchase land from a specified individual. As Kidner suggests, he makes 'skilful use of the fact that while a group tends to resent an intruder the owner of an asset may welcome a customer'.[21] Abraham's ploy is effective and he becomes the legal owner of the property. Although the price he pays is high (23:16),[22] the legal possession of the land makes the price irrelevant. Westermann comments that, 'it is so important for Abraham to gain unimpeachable possession of the burial place that he will pay any amount for it'.[23]

The narrator undoubtedly intends us to regard this acquisition as part of the fulfilment of the promise of land[24] - otherwise that promise is never fulfilled personally to Abraham.[25]

Von Rad is emphatic on this point,

> Did the patriarchs who forsook everything for the sake of the
> promise go unrewarded? No, answers our narrative. In death
> they were heirs and no longer 'strangers'. A very small part of
> the Promised Land - the grave - belonged to them; therefore they

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[20] See, for example, Gunkel, op. cit., 275, and Procksch, op. cit., 528.

[21] Kidner, op. cit., 145.

[22] As B. Vawter comments, 'We have no way of being sure, but we may doubtless surmise with the greatest probability that it was a noble sum indeed that Ephron exacted . . . David bought the temple site and the materials for sacrifice for fifty silver shekels (2 Sam 24:24). In any case, Abraham paid the stipulated price without protest. It undoubtedly pleased the Biblical author to record that the patriarchal tombs at Machpelah had passed from Hittite ownership into that of the Hebrews by no deed of condescension from the inhabitants of Canaan but only through a munificent gesture of Israel's great ancestor' (*On Genesis: A New readingl, Garden City: Doubleday,*1977 p. 265).

[23] Op. cit., 1986, 375.

[24] Martens describes it as, 'a down-payment so to speak, of the larger land block' (op. cit., 34).

[25] N. Leibowitz disagrees: 'It is difficult to regard this passage as exemplifying, even in the slightest degree, the promise of sovereignty and majesty which had been promised to Abraham in relation to the land and the inhabitants thereof' (*Studies in Bereshit.* 4th edition Jerusalem: World Zionist Organisation, 1981 pp. 208-210). Leibowitz regards the negotiations as humiliating for Abraham but he fails to recognize that the passage actually honours Abraham by calling him a 'mighty prince' (23:6) and by recording his refusal to haggle over the land (23:15-16).

did not have to rest in 'Hittite earth' or in the grave of a Hittite
(cf. verse 6), which Israel would have considered a hardship
difficult to bear.[26]

Furthermore, it seems likely that the acquisition of a burial site marks
permanent possession of the land (cf. Joshua 24:32). The importance of
the fact that Sarah is buried in the land of promise is underscored by the
repeated description, 'Hebron in the land of Canaan' (23:2, 19).[27]

The purchase of this land completes the development of the theme in the
Abraham narratives. The theme began as 'the land I will show you'
(12:1). Then the land of Canaan is identified as the land which Abraham's
seed will possess (12:7), and at a later stage it is also promised to Abraham
personally (13:15). One final development before Abraham actually
possesses a token part of the land, is the promise of the land under oath
(15:18). In each case the development of the promise of land is preceded
by an act of obedience or an indication of faith on the part of Abraham.
Thus, the first explicit promise that Canaan will be the possession of
Abraham's seed, is given after he arrives there in obedience to the divine
command (12:4-7). Secondly, the land is promised to Abraham
personally, after he has refused to fight over it and after he has given Lot
the opportunity to choose (13:9). Thirdly, the promise of land on oath
(15:18), follows the statement that 'Abram believed the Lord and he
credited it to him as righteousness' (15:6). Finally the test of Abraham in
relation to Isaac and his unfaltering obedience (22:1-10) are the
background against which he acquires possession of the land at Machpelah
(23:1-20).

Significance of the Theme of Land and Conclusions
We can conclude, that 'land' is a major theme in the Abraham narrative.
However, the basic concepts underlying the theme are introduced in the
primeval narrative. Land is not merely a passive onlooker in the created
order nor is it simply the material that God uses; it is actively involved in
the process of creation. Furthermore, land has a unique relationship with

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[26] Von Rad regards the purchase of land as an attempt by 'P' to obviate the difficulty caused
by the promise of land not being fulfilled during the life-time of the patriarchs. He writes, '
Possession of the land of Canaan was promised to the patriarchs. They themselves were
already living in the land, to be sure, but were not yet in possession of it, i.e., the promise
was not yet fulfilled. This strangely broken relationship to the promised saving benefit,
namely, the land - this promise . . . could not remain conceptually unformulated for so
precise a theologian as P (op. cit., 250).
[27] Cf. Ross, op. cit., 409.

the human beings and even provides the raw material from which the first man is made. The possession of land with clearly defined boundaries is the symbol of security and blessing while lack of a fertile piece of land is equated with insecurity and danger. On the other hand, the human beings are given responsibility to maintain and to care for the land (1:1-2:25).

While emphasising this interdependence of land and human beings, Genesis also concentrates on the vulnerability of the relationship; the behaviour of humans can adversely affect the land and damage their relationship with it. This leads to punishment which limits, or removes, the benefits that people receive from the land; the punishment of Adam, Cain, Noah's contemporaries and the tower builders, adversely affect their relationship with the land.

The relationship between human beings and land is related to their relationship with God; land is given by God and he maintains ultimate control of it. When the divine/human relationship is harmonious, the human/land relationship is good. The breakdown of relations between human beings and God precipitates the breakdown of the interrelationship between mankind and the land. A person's relationship to land is, therefore, a reflection of their relationship with God. Harmonious relations with God is the appropriate context for blessing but alienation from God is associated with cursing which affects not just the human beings themselves but also their land.

An understanding of the relationship between human beings and the land in Genesis 1-11 is a guide to understanding the role of land in the Abraham narrative. The movement in the primeval narrative is from the ideal surroundings in Eden, where land, God and humankind have a harmonious relationship, towards ever increasing hostility until the humans are scattered over all the earth. The movement of humankind further and further from the ideal land in Eden is seen as a consequence of the progressive deterioration of their relationship with God. In the Abraham narrative, on the other hand, the relationship with God becomes progressively closer and the promises of land become more explicit. The land of Canaan is introduced as 'the land that I will show you', and the theme develops until Abraham is buried in that land on a plot of ground that he owns. In the primeval narrative mankind had moved away from God and at the same time away from secure land. The reverse happens in the Abraham narrative as in obedience he moves closer to God and closer to the possession of land.